

The Trials of George Thomas – Seven

The Return:

I'd left more sirloins in the refrigerator after Bill and I had eaten the previous evening so Helen could have something besides LTS foods to eat. Her first stop when we arrived home was to take a long, hot shower and her second stop was to her dresser where she took out clean underwear, a shirt and jeans. The sirloins weren't quite thawed and she put them on the thawing plate. I took in the bag of potatoes from Costco and she said she was going to the grocery store.

"What do we need?"

"I want a decent salad."

"All they had was head lettuce where we shopped yesterday."

"If I can't get mixed greens, I'll get the components and do it myself. You're going back after the firewood tomorrow?"

"Yes, there's quite a bit of it; maybe six or seven cords."

"I'd tell you twenty minutes but it will probably take more like an hour. You should have a fair portion of our things put away by then, shouldn't you?"

"I should. I'm going to set the trailer up so we have our must have Bugout supplies in it. I'm also going to change how our backpacks are setup. It might be a good idea to divide the remaining Mountain House singles and doubles between them."

As I unloaded our weapons, I put everything except the Mossberg shotguns, our most recently recorded purchase, in the shelter and covered over the shelter entrances with a tarp which I then covered with some of the rock from our desert landscaping. I quickly discovered that it would take longer to unload and sort than I first thought when Helen arrived home two hours after she left. She had so many groceries, I had to stop and help her carry them to the kitchen.

"I went to Costco, Sam's and Wal-Mart. I think I made good time."

"I'll say. What all did you get?"

"A lot of meat, vegetables, pasta, rice, coffee, tea, mixed greens and so on and so forth. No beans. I spent seven hundred dollars. I guess our direct deposits hit."

"About that. Bill and I discussed it and if we get involved with an insurrection, we might quit our jobs. He thought Susan and you might too, provided we had enough to live on."

“I’d like to keep my job if it’s all the same to you. Who knows how long an insurrection might last? We’d really be scrimping trying to make it on what we have and the income from our investments.”

“I don’t know if it makes any difference, but the price of gold is much higher.”

“How high?”

“Over three thousand an ounce.”

“How do you know?”

“We bought the night vision scopes and the guy sold us eight for twenty-four ounces of gold.”

“What do they run?”

“About ten grand each or sixty total. They are LEO and military only. Eighty thousand dollars’ worth of scopes for twenty-four ounces of gold. That’s \$3,300 an ounce.”

“That’s all the more reason for me to work for one or two years longer. My salary will cover all of our expenses, the annuity payments and give us working capital.”

“How about we all work until the insurrection breaks out, if it does in fact break out? We can revisit the question at that time.”

“I guess I can live with that. You’re thinking an insurrection might not happen?”

“It depends on what the government does in large part; and, how those actions are perceived by many Americans. It depends on whether there is a move afoot to trigger something.”

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In the words of the Grail Knight, President Biden chose poorly. He directed that brute force be used to put down the violence occurring around the country. He might have gotten away with that had not several instances occurred where peaceful people, such as us, were targeted by the military. In consequence, the military revolted in a manner of speaking beginning with the National Guard units who simply walked off the ‘battlefield’. They returned to their families taking their equipment with them.

(Note: Yeah, I’m a Harrison Ford fan and like 50s and 60s music... so sue me.)

Next, websites began spring up on the internet, most quoting Thomas Jefferson. They were essentially reminders of some of his more notable quotes/letters:

The strongest reason for the people to retain their right to keep and bear arms is as a last resort to protect themselves against tyranny in government.

I hold it, that a little rebellion, now and then, is a good thing, and as necessary in the political world as storms in the physical.

God forbid we should ever be twenty years without such a rebellion. The people cannot be all, and always, well informed. The part which is wrong will be discontented, in proportion to the importance of the facts they misconceive. If they remain quiet under such misconceptions, it is lethargy, the forerunner of death to the public liberty. ... What country before ever existed a century and half without a rebellion? And what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance? Let them take arms. The remedy is to set them right as to facts, pardon and pacify them. What signify a few lives lost in a century or two? The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure.

Whenever the people are well informed, they can be trusted with their own government; that whenever things get so far wrong as to attract their notice, they may be relied on to set them to rights.

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only legitimate object of good government.

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When President Biden issued an Executive Order to recall all gold and silver with none being exempt from the recall, several websites posted the following:

That we are overdone with banking institutions which have banished the precious metals and substituted a more fluctuating and unsafe medium, that these have withdrawn capital from useful improvements and employments to nourish idleness, that the wars of the world have swollen our commerce beyond the wholesome limits of exchanging our own productions for our own wants, and that, for the emolument of a small proportion of our society who prefer these demoralizing pursuits to labors useful to the whole, the peace of the whole is endangered and all our present difficulties produced, are evils more easily to be deplored than remedied.

Finally, someone posted:

Resistance to tyranny is obedience to God. – Dissent is the highest form of patriotism.

That was the last straw and the government shut the internet down, again. We four had returned to work, waiting for the hue and cry of people who were fed up with the do nothing Congress and the repressive policies of President Biden. As the peace was forcefully restored, the rebuilding began which was a salve for the ailing economy. The

government recall of gold and silver had few responding and the BATFE was tasked with a new duty, track down purchasers. They resorted to credit card records first and next, the bank deposits of the precious metal dealers.

They soon discovered that the largest purchaser of precious metals was someone named Cash. He died a while back, didn't he? The dealers, remembering FDR, wrote Cash for cash purchases, even when they knew the identity of the purchaser. A bill was introduced in the House, where it died, that would have created harsh penalties for failure to redeem gold and silver at the mandated price, about 20% of the London price.

Apparently there were some who believed the old saw, *Just because you're paranoid, doesn't mean they aren't out to get you.* These people were willing to sell their gold and silver as long as they made a profit and were paid more than the government offered. It was almost like, 'Psst... know anyone who might be in the market for a couple of gold/silver coins?' The government was paying \$450 for the gold and \$9 for silver.

We always had a little cash, enough to buy one or two coins. When a level of trust was established we bought more. Overall, we paid \$500 for gold and \$10 for silver. We stopped that when the BATFEPM began sting operations hoping to locate people who were adding to their existing supply. We just continued to work, biding our time.

Two things happened within days of each other, triggering the insurrection. The first pertained to the BATFEPM. During the course of making a seizure, they gunned down an entire family, killing them all. The second pertained to the 2012 elections. They would be postponed until 2014. That did it! All of those missing 'Assault Weapons' were suddenly no longer missing. We knew something was up ahead of time because, before the internet went down, yet again, there was almost no surplus or imported ammo to be found. It would be on the website one day and the next day when you went to order, they'd be sold out. It was worse than the aftermath of November 2008.

Some manufacturers had anticipated having a demand to meet, eventually, and continued to build weapons which were banned. Ruger was building Mini-14s, Mini-30 and SR-556 at full capacity. H&K continued to build and warehouse the HK-416s and HK-417s intended for the military market. The models being built were the select fire military versions. They were not at all what H&K had intended to build for the civilian market.

Anyone and everyone building semi-auto military caliber rifles was doing so and building inventory. Products were sold, but only those tailored to avoid all the definitions in the new Assault Weapons Ban. Somehow during the writing of the new ban, one firearm was omitted. It had been intended to feature prominently on the banned list but someone, somewhere, failed to include it in the list and those in Congress, who noticed, said not one word. The rifle, as you may well guess, was built in Genesco, Illinois.

Check-mate Industries had completed a huge production run of the 20 and 25 round magazines, just as had Ruger. The volume production would have allowed the magazines to retail at a reduced price. However, they were being sold as pre-ban magazines

and commanded high prices. There's a sucker born every minute. Colt had likewise been building 30 round magazines for the HBAR-15s and had more than a few pre-ban magazines available, for a price. The magazines fit more than just the Colt HBAR-15.

The Trials of George Thomas – Eight

The Rebellion:

In 1775, the shot heard around the world emanated from Lexington. “Nobody knew then, nor knows today with any significant certainty, who fired the first shot of the American Revolution.” The first shot of the Second American Revolution was fired in Washington, District of Columbia, and was a long range shot fired by a sniper who missed, this time. The bullet, caliber .338 Lapua Magnum, was recovered by the Secret Service after they shoved President Biden into the bulletproof limo. It was damaged to the degree that it wouldn’t be possible to match the bullet to the rifle that fired it.

When Bill heard the radio report, he told me. He called Susan and I called Helen. We all agreed to work to the end of the week (today is Thursday) and tender our resignations. The battle would soon be joined and Helen would prove to be correct when she asked, “Who knows how long an insurrection might last?”

With the curfew having elapsed and the state of emergency being cancelled as areas were brought under control, we were able to move our half of the weapons and munitions from their shelter to our shelter. I guess I forget to mention something. Laying a tarp down and covering it with some of the rock from the yard proved to be unsatisfactory. My plan B was to lay two courses of bricks in a 4’ square around each entrance. I’d fit half inch plywood to each hole and then coat each board on one side with Elmer’s glue and poured sand over the resulting sticky mess. After the glue set up, I’d add more to any spots where it hadn’t stuck the first time and added some sand with some Elmer’s mixed in. The result would be a rather uneven layer of sand on the upside of the sheet.

I’d leave a small hole on the outside of a vertical grout seam just large enough for a 5/16” bolt. The bolt could be pushed in and pulled out. It pushed in until it hit the cap. When it pulled halfway out, the end was beneath a vertical bolt and if one stepped down on the extended bolt, the bolt raised up in the empty portion of the grout seam pushing on the vertical bolt which, in turn, raised the plywood just enough to catch your finger under it. I had been inspired by the bar with the moving lamps or whatever. I’d end up using Plan C.

Helen started the oven for a pizza while Bill and I moved our things to our shelter. It was another of those huge Costco deluxe pizzas and this time, I had the MGD. I’ll drink Colorado Kool-Aid, but it’s not on the top of my list. We’d had a year, more or less, and all of the weapons had been checked out, sighted in and so forth. We all had four sets of new uniforms, all MultiCam plus the cop clothing with custom embroidered patches. The badges were real and they were for the Poplar, Montana Police Department. They were part of a limited edition of the actual badges authorized by Police Chief Jesse Johnson. They were the standard duty uniform issue badge. The source was Lawman Badge Company and they cost \$165 each. We had those long before the internet went down, again. The internet was becoming like a roller coaster, up and down.

“Now, it’s agreed that we store all of our weapons and ordnance in the shelters along with the clothing we bought to pull this off, right?”

“Right.”

“And, when we dress up in whichever uniform we chose, everyone wears coveralls, right?”

“Right. That’s going to be awful hot in the summer. My pickup doesn’t have air.”

“Get one of those evaporative window air conditioners.”

“Where?”

“I have it written down. It’s someplace up north.”

“Do you have a phone number?”

“I think so.”

The type of air conditioner Bill was referring to was generally in use from the 1930s to the 1960s, before my time. He called me back that night with the number and address and I tried to call the next morning using my cell.

“Classic Aire, can I help you?”

“I hope so. I have an old pickup with no air conditioning. A buddy mentioned your company.”

“Make and model?”

“1968 Chevrolet.”

“Ok. Some year models of GMC and Chevy pickup trucks have metal reinforcing around the window glass. The HT Option is required to fit these vehicles.”

“I don’t have that.”

“That’s an old truck, restored?”

“No. I just replaced the gasoline engine a few years back with a diesel. It has an 8’ bed.”

“Do you want a Ram Air or a fan powered? The fan powered runs about \$150 more, in round numbers. Three sixty nine for Ram-Air sedan only, three eighty nine for the Ram-Air HT which fits all body styles. The fan models run five nineteen and five thirty nine.”

“Where do they get the power?”

“Cigarette lighter.”

“I think I’d better go with the fan power HT. Let me get my credit card number for you.”

“We ship UPS ground. Where are you?”

“Mesa, Arizona. “

“Two business days, three tops. Your credit card number?”

I read him the number and he got it approved on a dial up connection. He said that he had added the freight and gave me the total. It must not weigh much. Well, if the only support was the window glass I supposed that it shouldn’t. About the time I finished up the phone call, Bill made a sweeping gesture with his hand indicating that he’d given the bad news to the boss and that it was my turn.

“You too?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Are you in here to resign your job?”

“I’m afraid so. I have to tell you working for the company in all of its iterations has been a pure pleasure and I’m really sorry I couldn’t give you more notice.”

“You’re the fifth person today that said about the same thing. You know Bill resigned.”

“Yes, I knew that.”

“Did you know about the others?”

“No, only about myself and Bill. Our wives are resigning their jobs too. We are reasonably well set and have a few things we’d like to do before age prevents it.”

“You’re only what, 52?”

“Fifty three on Monday.”

“You know the drill. You’ll be paid for any accumulated vacation and the standard sick leave allowance. No severance since the separation is voluntary.”

“Anything I need to sign?”

“No. Your final checks will be directly deposited. You’ll get two, one for your regular pay and the other for your vacation and sick leave, as per policy. Are Bill, you and your wives going to be traveling together?”

“We might, some of the time. I’ve always wanted to learn to ride a horse and if I wait much longer, I’ll break every bone in my body if I fall off.”

“Bill and you go back a ways.”

“Yes, all the way back to when I hired on. Bill and his wife Susan are going to teach Helen and me how to ride.”

“It’s none of my business, but what are you going to live on?”

“We’ve been quite frugal. Our home is paid for and we have investments. Good investments that still provide enough to live on. We have a retirement annuity that we’ve managed to fully fund over the past year.”

“That’s good. You’re vested in the pension plan but leaving at this length of service will reduce the benefit. There’s no telling if we’ll still have Social Security in twelve years.”

“I’d better get back to work and give you a full day on my final day.”

“Right.”

When I got back to the line Bill told me that he’d talked to Susan and she’d submitted her paperwork. She had a mandatory two week notice requirement to meet. Since I hadn’t heard from Helen, I called her on the lunch hour.

“Can you talk?”

“George, you’re not going to believe it. They offered me a twenty percent raise if I’d stay a year and train a replacement. What should I do?”

Twenty percent was nine grand minus taxes. Helen had the maximum vacation accumulation because the office had been shut down.

“Will they allow you to use up some of your existing vacation equal to the vacation you will accrue during the coming year?”

“Yes; I asked about that.”

“Go for it as long as they agree to you taking the vacation over the coming year.”

“I have four weeks accumulated and will accrue 2 more weeks. They have to let me use it due to their use it or lose it policy.”

“We’ll figure something out, don’t fret.”

I went back and filled Bill in. If he was disappointed, he didn’t show it. If one of us continued to work that would be less of a sign that something was up. And, those nine thousand dollars, less taxes, would cover all of our bills, allowing us to devote her entire old net salary to preps and other ‘necessary expenses’. We could still do the riding lessons, on weekends. We stopped by their home after work and were about ready to leave.

Before we could leave, Bill called out, “They caught the sniper.”

“Who was it?”

“A former military sniper.”

“What did he have to say for himself?”

“Nothing. Apparently, he received a medical discharge from the Army due to psychological issues. They have a rifle but don’t have any bullets to match to the barrel and the FBI says that the imprint of the bolt face doesn’t match the one casing the Secret Service found. Therefore they can’t match the rifle to any of the evidence they do have. They only have two of the three elements, means and opportunity. They’re working on motive. If he’s a nutcase, they may never determine motive.”

“Did he make a statement?”

“If you can call it that, yes. They read him his rights and did the song and dance and asked him if he wished to waive his rights. His response was, ‘No’, and he refused to utter another word. Remember what John Ross wrote about in ‘Unintended Consequences’? The Five Sicilians?”

“They had to let them go because they couldn’t prove anything. They weren’t even sure if the guys spoke English.”

“Right. They found a dog eared copy of the book among this guy’s personal effects. Anyway, they got the guy a Public Defender. The guy won’t speak with him. He’s been in custody for over 24 hours and has only uttered the word, ‘No’, one time when he refused to give up his fifth amendment rights. They identified him from his fingerprints and personal papers. They had a search warrant; he didn’t consent to the search.”

“That means he said ‘No’ twice. How long can they hold him?”

“I’m not sure, maybe 48 to 72 hours unless they come up with something; maybe charge him with obstruction of justice for not telling them his name. The rifle is the right caliber and he’s a former sniper and they can place him the Washington area because

that's where he lives; actually Virginia. Means and opportunity. He's white; Obama was black, so maybe that points to a motive."

"Contrary to popular depictions in the fictional media, the police cannot convict merely on these three famous elements, but must provide convincing proof of means used, and opportunity actually acted upon by the defendant charged. Since the internet is back up, again, I checked Wiki. Both the 5th and 6th amendments are applicable in this case. They have to have a prima facie case to charge him. Prima facie evidence need not be conclusive or irrefutable: at this stage, evidence rebutting the case is not considered; only whether any party's case has enough merit to take it to a full trial. The media is reporting they don't have a prima facie case and several prominent attorneys have joined together to secure a Writ of Habeas Corpus. If the guy cooperated with them at all before he was read the Miranda Warning, he may have given up his rights. So we jumped the gun?"

"What are you saying George?"

"If they got the guy, whether he goes to trial or not, there goes the Revolution."

"That's what I thought you may have meant. No, we didn't jump the gun. Hell no!"

"We're going ahead?"

"Is the FBI catching a guy they think may be responsible going to bring the Wilcox family back? The BAFTEPM murdered them. Is it going to undo the precious metals recall? Will it undo National Healthcare? Will it eliminate the new Assault Weapons Ban? Will it restore the economy? The answer to all of those questions is, in a word, no. Oh yeah, it's damn the torpedoes, full speed ahead!"

"Farragut?"

"That's the guy. It's slightly misquoted, but that the essence of his order."

"Next question. Who do we target?"

"No one I know of would blame us one iota for targeting the BATFEPM. We might get ourselves some MP5s or even a Barrett."

"An MP5 might have an occasional use but I have a better rifle than the Barrett."

"Yeah, me too."

"Helen and I need to get home. I think best when I'm not tired. Are we getting our first riding lesson tomorrow?"

"You still want to do that?"

“Looking forward to it.”

“Come by around 10 am and we’ll drive out to the stable.”

“Good, see you tomorrow. Helen, are you ready to go home?”

“Be right there George. You two got a little loud. Argument?”

“Not so much. I mean the FBI has a guy in custody and we’re going ahead with our plans. Were it up to me, I’d let it play out a bit before making a move.”

“You said three others besides Bill and you resigned?”

“That’s what John said.”

“Do you know who?”

“Fraid not. Bill might know, I’ll ask tomorrow.”

“We’re doing something tomorrow?”

“First riding lesson.”

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“Bill, what was that all about honey?”

“What was what about?”

“The raised voices.”

“George questioned whether we should proceed with the plan now that FBI has made an arrest. From what I’ve heard, they’ll never make a case stick. And, even if they do, that won’t undo the bad stuff that’s happened. It sure won’t bring the Wilcox family back to life or cancel the precious metal recall or undo that healthcare mess or eliminate the new AWB.”

“Is there more to it than that?”

“I guess I wonder if he’s having second thoughts.”

“Are you?”

“No way. It’s time to kick the tires and light the fires.”

“Will it be ok?”

“If we’re very careful, we shouldn’t have a problem. Eventually when they piece it all together, we very likely could be facing counter sniper teams.”

“Then what?”

“Plan B, we start blowing things up.”

“Domestic terrorism?”

“That’s what they will call it; it will only be against the infrastructure. Our first task is to send the BATFEPM an unmistakable message that their high handed tactics are unacceptable.”

The following day, the four went to a riding stable where they rented horses and George and Helen got their first riding experience. Before the four called it a day, they had taken the horses through everything but a full gallop. Horses have four natural steps, the walk, the trot, the canter and the gallop. These horses were selected because they also did the ambling gait instead of the trot. The four returned the following day after church and put the horses through the walk, the ambling gait and the gallop. Helen was a natural and George didn’t fall off. He was most comfortable with the walk and the ambling gait. (Tennessee Walking horses?)

On Monday, Bill sent Susan off with a purse full of cash and a shopping list for more firearms. They were the old fashioned kind that could be fired using black powder. The list included used Ruger Vaqueros in .45 Colt in the 7½”, 5½” and 4⅝” barrels. It also included Marlin lever action rifles, the 1894 Cowboy in .45 Colt and the 1895 Cowboy in .45-70. He also instructed her to call Kirkpatrick and get four rifle scabbards and the Laredo Crossdraw rigs for the revolvers. He said he’d stop on the way back home from the stable and pick up some ammo and order more. When Bill arrived at George’s to take him riding for a third day, George tried to beg off.

“I don’t believe I can do it today.”

“Backside a little tender?”

“More than a little.”

“We’ll keep it short today. A walk followed with an ambling gait followed with another walk and finally a gallop. We’ll walk them back to the corral from wherever we end up.”

“Susan not going?”

“Sent her shopping for, I can’t believe I’m saying this, Cowboy guns.”

“What’s she getting?”

“Used .45 Colt Ruger Vaqueros in 4^{5⁄8}”, 5^{1⁄2}” and 7^{1⁄2}”. Marlin Cowboys in .45 Colt and .45-70. She’ll call Kirkpatrick when she gets home and order the Crossdraw rigs and scabbards. Come on, get off your duff and let’s get going.”

“Oh all right.”

We need to get you a hat.”

“I have a hat.”

“I’ve never seen you wear it.”

“I’ll get it.”

“A black Stetson?”

“Calvary hat. Bought it from Global Security. Rope with acorns and Pin were extra. It weren’t cheap.”

“I suppose you bought the Calvary saber while you were at it?”

“As a matter of fact, yes. Actually we bought two complete hats and two 1860 Trooper Sabers.”

“Next you’re going to tell me you bought the reverse holsters so you can Crossdraw your saber and revolver.”

“Guess I don’t have to since you already guessed. The 7^{1⁄2}” barrel IS the Calvary model.”

By then we had arrived at the stable. We climbed on the horses and headed out to ride. The guy holding the horse for me said, “Nice hat,” but I could hear him snickering as we rode off. I was getting comfortable with the walk and ambling gait but I didn’t care much for the canter. The gallop was one of those gaits you worked up to until you were very comfortable astride a horse, at least as it applies to me. We spent the week and the following weekend riding. I suspect I was forming a callous on my bottom end. Nonetheless, by the close of business Sunday, I could more or less ride a horse. The last three days we even had to saddle and unsaddle our horses.

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Bill had asked me to come over to their house around 9 am Monday. When I arrived, there were two additional cars parked out front. The cars looked familiar although I couldn’t put a face to either.

“You know Manny, Joe and Sam, don’t you?”

“Yes. High fellas. Wait a minute; John said that I made five that quit. I take it you are the other three?”

“Guilty as charged,” Sam responded.

“I know what led Bill and me to resign. What about the three of you?”

“Same reason. Back in 2010 the Tea Party sent a message to the politicians. They seem to have short memories. So, some people got together and sort of worked with the assassin the FBI has in custody. It wasn’t hard since he had his own axe to grind. They planted the seed and gave him enough cash for a fully outfitted VR-1 and ammo.”

“I heard that the Army put him out on a medical discharge.”

“That’s the absolute truth. He was in Afghanistan on a mission with a specific target. When he was certain, he squeezed the trigger and sent the bullet on its way. A gust of wind shifted the bullet and it hit a kid. Maybe it was a bad call. He cracked and they treated him for PTSD. When they felt he was functional but unable to return to duty, they gave him a medical discharge. He blamed the Commander-in-Chief for extending the war. He’s not really any crazier than the rest of us. He won’t help them build a case against him.”

“What’s he get out of it?”

“The satisfaction.”

“How did they catch him?”

“Mostly by accident. They ran a list of former snipers through their database and his name popped up. He lives in the Washington area and had the training. It was enough to get a search warrant and their search turned up the rifle. It wasn’t even hidden; he had it in a rifle rack with a cable lock. He actually said ‘No’ twice, once when they asked to search and again when they read him his rights. When they asked his name he didn’t respond and they pulled his Driver’s license from his wallet.”

“Why did he shoot at Biden?”

“The VR-1 is on the list of banned weapons. I’m guessing here, but I think it just plain made him angry.”

“They said on the news that the FBI had a shell casing. What’s with that?”

“The first shot he made at Andrews required him to shoot and scoot. He couldn’t find the casing and had to leave before they caught him. He sent the bolt to Vigilance and had the bolt face polished or some such thing. A chamber brush does to the chamber what a barrel brush does to the barrel. It’s like the fact that rifling marks on bullets usually can’t be matched to a barrel if the barrel had been cleaned a few times because the scratches are different. In his case they didn’t have any useable bullets to match.”

“We only picked up enough weapons at our source for the four of us.”

“We have our own and we shoot hand loads that have been loaded for each of our firearms.”

“And the targets?”

“We were discussing that with Bill when you showed up. We’re agreed on the BAT-FEPM because they will be hot on our heels anyway.”

“Oh?”

“We all have cruiser model shotguns with 14” barrels. On top of that, we all have Sure-fire suppressors on our Springfield Armory M21s and suppressors for our M1911A1s. We went together on our Tac-50 purchases so we could get a volume discount. They’re complete rigs with the Night Force scope and Elite Iron suppressors.”

“How big was the discount?”

“They threw in some extra magazines so we bought enough to get us each a total of 10. I made the mistake of buying gold on my Amex card back in 2000 and 2001. They will eventually find the records of purchases and well, you know... I bought most of it in March and April 2001.”

“Before you say anymore, I’ll have to tell you I’m having second thoughts. When we were camping up in Tonto, we both thought that an insurrection was the only solution. Things have steadily improved with the national emergency cancelled and martial law ending. However, the gold recall irks me to no end and killing the Wilcox family was uncalled for.”

“What are you saying George? Considering the time we spent acquiring supplies from Camp Navajo, I don’t understand what has come over you. Half measures will avail you nothing. You’re in it for the long haul or out; it’s just that simple.”

“Against my better judgment, I’m in. I’m already as deep in this as you are Bill. So, what is it, Cry Havoc and let slip the dogs of war?”

“Star Trek?”

“Shakespeare, in Julius Caesar.”

“But Christopher Plummer said it in Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country.”

“He had a thing for Shakespeare. Remember *Once more unto the breach, dear friends*. Or how about, *To be... or not to be?* or, *Tickle us, do we not laugh? Prick us, do we not bleed? Wrong us, shall we not revenge?* And, *Ahh... parting is such sweet sorrow. Don't we hear the chimes at midnight?* General Chang had one for every occasion.” (Chang was played by Christopher Plummer, a Canadian, and sometimes Shakespearian actor.)

“I don't like the idea of shooting people in the back, Bill.”

“So, we shoot them in the front.”

“And, we only go after BATFEPM agents, right?”

“That's right.”

“But, what if there is some other Law Enforcement Officer present and he or she takes exception?”

“That's why we're going to snipe rather than get involved up close and personal. You just said you're in. Are you certain of that?”

“Yes. In for the penny, in for the pound.”

“Good. Manny, fill George in on the contacts you've made on amateur radio.”

“George, there is an honest to God movement afoot around the country. I've talked to dozens of people I know that have long felt the same as we do. We've set up a communications system that is ideal for the times. Rather than using call signs, we've developed handles like they did when CB was the big craze. It's illegal, but these days, everything is illegal, so who cares?”

“As I said, they're all of like minds and sort of represent what the MSM calls 'Survivalists'. Some are small militias and a few not so small. These aren't White Supremacists or anything like that. They're simply Patriots who wish to restore the Constitutional Republic. There are key people in the US Government that only represent their own interests or that of their constituents and could care less about anyone else. Do any names come to mind?”

“Nancy and Harry?”

“To name two, yes. Barbara and Diane are two more. And don't forget Band-Aid John. Others are taking care of the civilians and we've agreed to take on the ATF. We're tak-

ing a class A motorhome and two diesel pickups with extended auto transfer tanks. I'm supplying the motorhome and Joe and Sam the pickups. They're late model Dodge Ram 3500s converted to the older Cummins 6BT engines. They're not new, but rebuilt Dodge Ram 6BT turbocharged engines. The manual transmissions and transfer cases have been rebuilt as needed. Each has a topper.

"My motorhome has solar panels on the roof, several deep cycle batteries and a diesel generator. The fuel tank was replaced with the largest that could be fit into the space available. The original fuel tank was moved to an alternate location and I can carry enough fuel for about 500 miles. The pickups are okay off road but the motorhome can't go there. They guys helped me pull the king sized bed and we replaced it with 4 bunks. The sofa is convertible so we can sleep 6. We also fitted a gun safe into a closet. Bill said you have MREs."

"Some. I wouldn't want them for a steady diet. Helen and I have a large supply of Mountain House products too. We'd be eating in restaurants part of the time, wouldn't we?"

"It would mostly be fast food," Joe replied. "My main question is how is everyone fixed for cash? We sure can't flash any gold or silver."

"Helen and I have three thousand in our safe."

"Susan and I have about the same."

Manny responded with, "We can come up with around twenty-seven hundred."

Sam replied with, "Thirty five hundred."

Joe summed it up with, "We have four grand. It sounds like we have more than enough for a good campaign."

I said, "I added it up; we have 3,000 plus 3,000 plus 2,750 plus 3,500 plus 4,000 for a total of 16,250. I suggest we each supply 2,500 and leave the rest with our wives. We can each take 6 ounces of gold and convert it to cash by hooking up with one of those Patriots."

"Why not silver?"

"Fifty to one ratio, less bulk."

"Ok. We'll meet again tomorrow at nine and stock the goods we need. We'll leave the day after and make a circuit of the land of the brave and home of the free, to make it freer."

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“How long with you be gone George?”

“I’m not sure Helen. All that Manny said was that we’d make a circuit of the country. We’ll be living in a motorhome and driving two pickups with toppers. I have to load what we’re taking into the pickup because we’re meeting tomorrow to outfit the pickups and motorhome. I think you should talk to Susan and the two of you stay together; either place will be fine, but their shelter is hidden better.”

“What’s your share?”

“It’s twenty-five hundred in cash and some of our food; MREs and Mountain House products.”

“And your weapons.”

“Of course my weapons. I’ll take my Tac-50 with both scopes, the Super Match with both scopes, the 590A1, the P-14 and Nite Hawg. I think it might be wise to take a HK-416 and HK-417. I’ll load plenty of ammo into the trailer. Two hundred forty rounds each of Mk 211, M1022 and Hornady, the rockets and grenades plus a couple cases of M118LR and the same of the M855.”

“Have you sighted in with the MUNs?”

“I’ll do it tomorrow night with Bill.”

The following night, Bill and I went to a range set up for long range rifle fire. The night was cloudless and we had ample light. We sighted in our Tac-50s and then our Super Matches. Oh, I didn’t tell you, Bill bought a Super Match before I did although he mostly shot his National Match. Weapons wise, we had about the same selection in weapons. He preferred the Hornady A-MAX for his Super Match. I tried it and it was fine and shot close the same point of aim. I’d stick with my M118LR.

Susan and Helen had a discussion and decided to stay at Susan and Bill’s. They moved all of Helen’s weapons, some ammo and two months of food for two from our house to theirs. Manny said that their wives were all going to stay at Sam’s because Sam had the best shelter. After tearful goodbyes, we hit the road.

Our first hurdle was the Agricultural Inspection station at Blythe. With Arizona plates, the inspector insisted on looking into the back of the two pickups. They wasn’t anything for him to see, the weapons were crammed into the gun safe in the motorhome and the ammo buried at the front of the pickup beds under the MREs, Mountain House meals and other LTS supplies. Had he checked the refrigerator in the motorhome, he would have found a few fresh fruits and vegetables. At the moment, there were no forbidden items.

Bill had a list of ATF offices, by state. Almost all of the offices were located in large cities, like Los Angeles. The agency had 26 field divisions and many of the field divisions had multiple offices. The Los Angeles field division covered the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, San Diego and Imperial. They worked out of nine locations with multiple units at several of the locations. The information was available if you accessed the Justice Department website, looked at the organization structure and selected the BATFE (they hadn't updated to their new name). Wait...don't bother, the website comes up 403 these days, ergo limited access, so you'll just have to take my word for it. What are they hiding?

[403 Forbidden The request was a legal request, but the server is refusing to respond to it. Unlike a 401 Unauthorized response, authenticating will make no difference.
404 Not Found.]

We found a spot at a KOA in Pomona. It was late and we hooked up the motorhome to amenities and all got showers. After that, we set up a charcoal grill, put spuds in the oven and opened two packages of lettuce for a salad. Rather than have anyone put out because his steak wasn't done the way he liked it, we all cooked our own. After supper, we hit a local grocery and got more salad dressings and lettuce.

"I've been thinking about something since we left Mesa. Let me ask what I believe is an obvious question, 'Why start in California?' California has just about the most restrictive gun laws in the US. We've all seen the list of states things can't be shipped to on the various firearms and ammo sites. CA, MA, NY, IL, MD and NJ have magazine and/or ammo controls as do FL, DC and a few other places. Now, Nevada is NFA friendly like Arizona and probably has proportionally more ATF agents than California. Wouldn't it make more sense to target ATF agents in NFA friendly states and ATF agents where the money is? Lots of money in California so I'm not suggesting we don't strike here and up in the Silicon Valley. Take out some the PM agents here and move to Nevada and work on Firearms agents. Loop south to our home ground and tackle a few more Firearms agents."

"You should have brought that up earlier George, it makes sense. I could go for something along those lines. Fellas?"

"It would sure confuse them if we bounced around like that from state to state with no obvious pattern. I could live with it. Joe, Sam opinions?"

"Just make a darned plan and stick with it. We're here now so we'll start here. If y'all want to do the Bay area, Reno and Vegas and return to Arizona, fine. Don't think we should let the wives know we're back home though. Better they not know exactly where we are. That way they can use the cover story that we went to California to do some hunting."

We watched the late news on channel 2, KCBS. They carried a story similar to the Wilcox case. In this instance, nobody resisted and the injuries were limited. All of the adult

members of the family, Mother, Father and oldest son were treated and released from USC Hospital. There are two USC hospitals, USC University Hospital and Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center. The latter is shown on the soap opera General Hospital. It's the hospital all the uninsured and poor folks use. The former happens to be the hospital where TOM had his 9½ hour Whipple Procedure performed.

The ATF personnel involved were working out of the Glendale office, one of several units that did. It was an out and out gold grab from a guy who always paid cash and didn't realize that his dealer started recording his name on the transactions. The dealer had taken a CYA approach leading up to the announcement.

"Got the address for the Glendale office?"

"Sure do. Want to stake it out?"

"According to John Ross, they wear those all black ninja outfits when they go on a raid. I say we take two pickups with two guys per. Someone has to stay here and guard the motorhome and monitor the news. We can keep in touch by radio. George, will you stay here?"

"Sure, if you want Manny. We're going to rotate the duty aren't we?"

"Yeah, we'll spread the risk. I say we follow the assault team on their next mission and take them out before they can hurt anyone else. If they have level IV armor, that means using the fifties. We'll all take turns staying here picking up any news and monitoring the scanner. If we get into a situation, we'll divide 'em up and take 'em out. Boogie in different directions and meet up here later. Joe, did you get the plates?"

"Same make, model and year as the two pickups and they have current tags. You still plan on having those on when we're on the mission and switching the plates before we come back here?"

"Yeah. Five minutes tops to change back to our plates and we toss the stolen plates in a dumpster."

"Everyone using the same ammo?"

"What do you and Bill use?"

"Hornady A-MAX Match 750gr."

"Yeah, that's what we use, why?"

"Be nice if everyone is using the same ammo so it's interchangeable."

“Being the Republik is so chicken about firearms, we’ll keep everything locked in the topper. Have to be pretty careful so we’re not seen with any firearms. Who has what for concealed carry?”

“Bill and I have a Warthawg or Nite Hawg in an ankle holster.”

“Joe, you still have the Warthog in an ankle holster?”

“Yep.”

“Sam which gun did you bring in an ankle holster?”

“Carry 9.”

“I have a Warthawg. That Carry 9 is underpowered. Want my spare Warthawg? I have a spare ankle holster and magazine pouch.”

“Nah. I use some old armor piercing 9mmP that Remington marketed in the sixties and seventies. It has a pointed steel core with a copper jacket. Works good and will punch through most body armor. I’ll use the Mozambique Drill if it won’t punch through the armor.”

“That won’t cut it Sam. I want everyone armed with a .45acp. I’ll get the pistol, extra magazines and two ankle holsters.”

They located the office and we spent four days surveying the location before the guys with the ninja suits came out of the building and climbed into two black Suburban’s. We followed at a distance and they ended up in a residential neighborhood in Northridge. We fanned out as quickly as possible and got set up on the roofs of four commercial buildings ranging from ~900 meters to ~1,250 meters. We were no sooner situated than they pulled ahead to a residence down the block and piled out, MP5s at the ready. While they fooled around getting a battering ram ready, we took out four of them. The remaining four attempted to take cover. They didn’t even have good concealment.

“On the count of three...”

“One... Two... Three.”

“Someone put another shot in the wounded one and let’s boogie. Stop at the mall parking lot and change the plates.”

“How’d it go?”

“We got eight.”

“Did you get their submachine guns?”

“No, people started coming out of their houses because of the gun fire. It’s time to move on; where to next?”

“The City by the Bay, followed by Reno and Vegas and then home.”

“Do we hole up when we get home or work them over while we’re there?”

“We’re on a roll. I think we should keep going. If we avoid Arizona they could conclude that it’s our home turf. You do realize that once they determine that .50 caliber rifles are being used, they’ll be going for dealer records and tracking down the gun owners?”

“Well, there are lots of companies building .50 caliber rifles these days.”

“True. However, considering the cost of the guns and ammo, the number of civilians owning one has to be limited.”

“It’s going to be hard for them. Most of the fifties are built with 1 turn in 15 with the primary difference being the number of lands and groves. On the other hand, they’re going to be confused because there are five different rifles involved and no spent brass to recover.”

“Any word on the guy they arrested for shooting Obama?”

“They let him go. No ballistic data to compare and he never said another word. You can bet they have him under surveillance.”

“Any discussions on the forums?”

“Yeah. It ranges from giving the guy a medal to deploring the government’s inability to make a case against him. That’s not the half of it, more ATF agents have been killed, all in sniping attacks. There doesn’t seem to be much commonality in the weapons used. They’ve included 7.62x51mm, .300 Winchester Magnum, .338 Lapua Magnum, .375 H&H Magnum and .50BMG.”

“Except for the .375, they’re all sniper calibers.”

“There have to be thousands, tens of thousands and maybe hundreds of thousands of those calibers floating around.”

“Don’t you just love it? Do you think we started a trend?”

“That’s hard to say. The proof will be in the pudding, as they say. Are you thinking that we may have actually fostered an insurrection?”

“Maybe. Time will tell. Let’s wait and see how it plays out.”

It took a full day to drive from the Pomona KOA to Petaluma/San Francisco North KOA. The other choices, Concord and Santa Cruz were booked. We passed San Quentin state prison on our way north and I shuttered to think it could be our new home if we were caught.

That didn't happen and a week later, I had the radio duty while the others were staking out an ATF office. When a group of four ninjas left, they were followed and taken out in a single volley of fire halfway between their Suburban and their victim's front door. The incident occurred in a small town in Marin County, San Anselmo. After moving and changing the plates back to our Arizona plates, we cut cross-country to I-80 and up to Reno.

During that same week, two US Senators and five US Representatives (all liberal Democrats) were killed by snipers. Additionally, there were instances of ATF agents being attacked, some successfully and some resulting in the death of the attackers. Those actions suggested it was a bad idea to take on ATF agents in face to face confrontations. We ended up in the Reno/Boomtown KOA.

Nevada has pretty much always been open as far as the NFA went. If a person looked around, it was easy to locate the now closed stores that sold NFA. At the moment, ATF was concentrating on getting the gold and silver. They had collected the 4473s from all of the dealers and were attempting to collect weapons as time permitted. The Treasury needed the gold and silver to 'restore the economy'.

It only took 3 days to identify our next target and take the four agents out. Things were heating up and we decided to skip Las Vegas and headed home with intentions of swinging by Camp Navajo to pick up more the HK-416s and 417s with the HK AG-C/EGLMs and ACOGs attached. We wanted more magazines for the rifles, assuming we could find them.

There were probably less than a dozen military people at Camp Navajo. Civilian guards were in evidence in moderate numbers. After a long discussion, we set the goal of acquiring all we could find of the two different weapons equipped as described. We intended to add more 40mm grenades and get some of those 40mmx46mm M1060 thermobaric grenades. A new hand grenade, the GHTB thermobaric hand grenade, was also in circulation. With the five of us, we accomplished our goal in two nights and headed down I-17 for home. We also added five cases each of the M993 and M995 armor piercing ammo. There were two cases of LAW rockets that went home with us along with some 40mm and hand grenades. We also picked up more of the M118LR Match ammo, M855, rifles and 6 MUNS.

As soon as we hit town, our plans to not notify our wives fell by the wayside. All five of them insisted on our getting together for an evening meal, as a group.

The Trials of George Thomas – Nine

Homecoming:

“I can’t believe you weren’t going to tell us you were home.”

“We’re just passing through and have some things for some of you.”

“What caliber?”

“Five-five-six and seven-six-two plus more 40mm grenades.”

“Where did you get them?”

“Same place as last time. There’re two crates of LAWs. We also picked extra smoke and frags.”

“What kind of ammo?”

“The five-five-six is M855A1 and M995. The seven-six-two is more of the M118LR and M993.

“And, what exactly are M993 and M995?”

“It’s that improved armor piercing.”

“The sniper attacks seem to be the main attraction on MSM.”

“We noticed that there were attempts in other places as well as California and Nevada. Anything on the ham bands?”

“There’s a lot of activity but it’s hard to follow. Most of the groups we pick up are using some kind of specific code for their group. You hear JBTs, MZBs used often. There are other expressions that we believe are different acronyms for the same expressions. The government is trying to keep a lid on with little success.”

“They aren’t going to keep that up long.”

“They’re offering a million dollar reward for each of you.”

“Did you cover up the shelter access and exit?”

“I did, quit worrying.”

“When this is over, I think I might reroute the entrance to the basement like Bill and Susan did theirs.”

“Find out how much a construction company would charge to replace the entrance pipe with concrete pedestrian walkways. If it’s in the budget, go ahead and get it done. Susan should be able to show you how they have their entrance concealed. They have two blast doors, one for their tunnel access and a second for the shelter.

“George, I think the five of you should cool your heels for a while. You can arrange for the contractor and get the pedestrian underpass put in; or, the five of you can do it by renting an excavator and a mobile crane. By the time you’ve finished, you’ll have a better idea how things are sorting out.”

“She’s right George.”

“Anyone disagree?”

The silence that followed answered that question. I got the Yellow Pages out and looked until I found an ad mentioning concrete pedestrian underpasses. I noted the number and would call them the following day. Bill and Manny both knew where we could rent the equipment. We then discussed the nature of our shelter and ways to connect the pedestrian tunnel to it. The only solution was to bring the underpass into the concrete block room at the bottom of the entrances. When constructed, I built block rooms six feet long by six feet wide. Did I tell you that already?

The shelter wasn’t centered in our backyard; it was offset because the shed was sitting on a slab. It didn’t matter because we had a corner lot that was somewhat larger than normal; normal being 65’ wide by 105’ from the back property line to the center of the street. Our lot was 105’ from the center of each street to the two back property lines. It cost double, too. The first project way back when had been the construction of a six foot high block wall along the north south property line next to the side street to keep our backyard private. The six foot high block wall across the front and two gates came later. We shot those two gangsters through the large gate.

The underpass would come into the basement about eight feet from the end. The next morning, I taped the distance and contacted the underpass dealer. He had six foot high by three foot wide with an oval top that actually was higher than six feet in the center. We had a choice of two, four or six foot lengths. I gave him the length I measured and he told me what I needed. He’d deliver, COD and would discount the price fifteen percent if paid in gold or silver. I told him bring it on because the wife was here full time and we’d pay in precious metals.

I heard a tractor or some kind of equipment shutting down in the driveway and went to check. It was Bill and Manny with a long reach backhoe.

“It won’t quite dig deep enough. We’ll have to do the last bit using shovels. It shouldn’t be too bad; it will only be three feet.”

“You sure that will dig seventeen feet deep?”

“Oh. Well, make that five foot of shovel work. I guess we should have gotten the other excavator. They had a Dynahoe 200-4 with a twenty foot dig depth.

“Can you take it back and switch it out?”

“We’ll be back.”

Everyone thinks he’s Arnold. When they returned, they didn’t have the Dynahoe 200-4. They had a Case 590 Super M+ Series 3 with the extendahoe with high capacity bucket. Manny said it would dig down to twenty feet four inches. The rental was about twice that of the Dynahoe which probably explained why someone had rented the Dynahoe already. We moved the loader backhoe around back and strung a line between the shelter location and the basement and squared it up. Manny positioned the backhoe above the shelter end and began to excavate.

“Why did he start there?”

“To make sure the excavation is centered on the block room. If it needs to be adjusted, now’s the time to do it. What’s the deal on the pedestrian underpass?”

“It’s being delivered today, COD.”

“In that case, you’d better take me to pick up the crane.”

“Why can’t we use the backhoe to lower the sections into place?”

“Do you have a heavy log chain?”

“Nope.”

“I’ll go get mine. The problem with excavations is the potential for cave-ins. If we only dig a little past where a section will fit, we can drop in a section and not have to worry about a cave-in. Do you have a concrete saw?”

“No, do you?”

“Yeah, I’ll bring it. The hard part is going to be moving those underpass sections together. I’ll bring my heavy duty come along and we’ll try to pull them together. Why don’t you go to Home Depot and get some kind of tar to seal the seams?”

“Helen, Manny is digging, Bill is going home for some equipment and I’m headed for Home Depot. A guy is going to be delivering the underpass sections and I agreed to pay him in gold and silver at spot. He’s giving us a fifteen percent discount for paying in precious metals. Don’t pay him until after he unloads. Check the spot price at Kitco.”

“No way.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’ll make him wait until you get back, so hurry.”

“Why?”

“I know nothing about gold and silver. I see nothing.”

“Ok Sergeant Schultz, have it your way.”

I hurried and one of the department people at Home Depot knew exactly what I needed to seal the underpass sections. I bought a five gallon pail and the recommended wide putty knife to spread it. When I returned, the underpass sections were being unloaded in the backyard and Manny had a trench about seven feet long to a depth of fifteen feet. The concrete block entrance room to the shelter was clearly visible. The stake had been off about a foot and he’d widened the trench slightly to allow the centering of the section and a straight run to the basement.

Bill pulled in about then and began to unload. I went into the house, brought up Kitco and got the spot price for gold and silver. Next, I retrieved enough to cover the full amount without the discount before returning to the backyard. The guy had just finished unloading and was getting the invoice from the cab.

“Do you have a concrete saw?”

“My friend brought his. Is there a problem?”

“Not really. I needed a three foot section but only had two, four and six. I substituted a four and you can cut it down. I only charged you based on three feet rather than four because we sell the underpass by the lineal foot. Here’s the invoice with the discount shown if you have gold and silver.”

“The spot price on Kitco was twenty-seven eighty-seven ninety for gold and thirty eight oh four for silver. You can figure from there.”

“Price was different when I checked.”

“That was the listed prices five minutes ago.”

“Start with gold and move to the silver. I take junk silver for the last little bit. Bomb shelter, huh? Going to connect it to your basement and hide the entrance behind a cabinet?”

“Something like that.”

“Don’t forget that there’s a grade up from your shelter to your basement. How deep is your basement?”

“Extra deep, ten feet.”

“Unusual. So you’re going to rise eight foot in sixty three feet run? That’s a twelve point seven percent grade. Eight feet in sixty four is twelve point five percent and each foot of run you add or subtract is about point two. You’ll be able to cut the sections at each end to properly mate them. I’d start with a six-footer. I’m not sure off the top of my head, but the angle will be in the vicinity of seven point two degrees. Keep in mind that one percent grade is about zero point five seven degrees. Only applies to small angles.”

“This is going to be tricky. We’re going to set the sections not long after we’ve cleared only a small amount of additional trench so we don’t have a problem with a cave-in.”

“Look at this way; eight feet is ninety-six inches. Sixty-three feet is seven hundred fifty-six inches. You raise the basement end about nine point six inches in six feet. Nine point six inches is twelve point seven percent of six feet. Close will be good enough. I’d better get going; I have enough gold and silver now to pick up my Tac-50 they’ve been holding on layaway. You’re obviously either a survivalist or a prepper. Me too. Somebody got the ball rolling to straighten out the AFT and I plan to do my part.”

“Get Hornady AMAX 750gr Match cartridges. Good stuff.”

“I’ll keep that in mind. If you’re going to use the backhoe to lower the sections, cut them first and make sure the hoe is aligned on the trench with the outriggers deployed. You might think about putting some concrete on the tunnel floor after it’s closed in. Get a guy to pump it for you; less work and he’ll be at the pump, not in your basement where you’re putting in ‘the addition’. Gotta go.”

He no sooner left than Joe and Sam showed up to lend a hand. The four of us made some measurements and Bill and Sam went down to the shelter entrance room and started sawing out the wall. Joe and I used paper and pencil to draw lines on a seven foot long piece of shelf paper for a pattern to determine how we were going to cut the angle off the six foot section of underpass. Using the edge of the paper, we measured the seven point two degree angle with a protractor. We might be a shade off and decided to seal the first connection with the tar.

Bill and Sam finished up cutting out the entrance in the entrance room at an angle and set the rubble aside. Sam then began the cut on the underpass following the blue chalk line. He was finishing up as Manny shut down the Case.

“That’s as far as I want to go. Did you get the crane?”

“We’re going to use the backhoe to lower the sections. You’re going to need to line up with the tunnel trench and lower the section into place. I got tar to seal it in place after we use the come along to pull it into position. We’ll need to be nine point six inches higher on the basement side. I got that from the guy who delivered the underpass sections.”

“Got a question.”

“Go for it, Joe.”

“Why are you doing this? You have two identical entrances already.”

“We’re now planning to put in a raised bed over each and plant strawberries. They’ll still be escape tunnels if we need to use them. Besides taking a break from our campaign, I’ve been thinking about the broader implications of Biden being President. We probably fired the third shot heard around the world this go around. It occurred to me that one or more of the major powers might choose to take advantage of our fighting among ourselves. A GTW is always possible if that were to happen. Iran probably has enough nuclear material to construct a few nukes, bringing the known count of nuclear nations to ten.

“Then, you have to make allowances for Jerry’s suggestions in his stories. He generally includes some of the Republics, South Africa, Japan, Germany, Brazil and Venezuela, doubling the number of nuclear powers. He also suggests that once it gets started every strategic nuke and a fair number of tactical nukes will be employed. And TOM seems to agree with him. If it starts, I believe it going to be an all-out conflict until only one country has useable weapons left. Helen and Susan each ordered another 10 year supply from Walton Feed and asked for hot shot delivery. The only thing we’re missing is an AMP 200 from Arrow Tech and Helen is working on that. We’ll need it if someone nukes Phoenix.”

“How long is this project going to take?”

“I don’t know; a week maximum?”

“Are we going back out or lay low?”

“How about we discuss it after the project is done?”

“Fair enough. Marilyn and I discussed it last night and we’re going to make a bulk buy from Emergency Essentials and get some of their Provident Pantry products.”

Marilyn was Joe’s wife and their only child worked in Pennsylvania; Manny was married to Cassandra and their children were grown and spread out all over the county; and, Sam was married to Julia and their twins both worked in Minneapolis. I continued the discussion with Joe to get an idea what they were going to buy. He said two of the su-

per supplies of freeze dried meat (24 cans total), two of the super supply of freeze dried vegetables (36 cans total), two of the super supplies of freeze dried fruits (30 cans total), two super supplies of cheese (12 cans total) and a case each of about thirty other items including dairy, eggs, breakfast mixes and so forth.

I asked when they were going to place the order and he said in about three days. I said I'd talk to Helen about maybe getting some things and suggested that he tell the others. Maybe we could get up a group buy large enough for either a bulk discount or a reduction of the freight costs. He took off to explain it to Bill, Manny and Sam. I decided to wait until that evening to discuss it with Helen. She could call and make sure they weren't backordering, too.

"I was talking to Joe today. Marilyn and he are going to place a large order with Emergency Essentials. We have quite a bit of food but it couldn't hurt have more."

"What are they getting?"

"He said two of the super supplies of freeze dried meat, two of the super supply of freeze dried vegetables, two of the super supplies of freeze dried fruits, two super supplies of cheese and a case each of about thirty other items including dairy, eggs, breakfast mixes and so forth. The only thing that I think we could add to that would be more coffee and tea, bath tissue, additional pasta and sauces and a case of strike anywhere matches if we can find them. Could you give them a call tomorrow and check on availability? He's going to talk to Manny, Sam and Bill and we might be able to either get a volume discount or save a bunch on freight."

"I'll talk to the other wives and see what they think. We should consider adding to our hygiene supplies and there's the matter of clothing. It wouldn't hurt to add underwear, shirts, pants, socks and so forth. Maybe some good work boots and cold weather clothing."

"Cold weather clothing? It doesn't get that cold here."

"True, in normal times. Things aren't normal by any stretch of the imagination. I was waiting to tell you what I heard on the news and I might as well spit it out. North Korea moved troops to the DMZ and they tested another nuke. Apparently they got a yield of about 25kT. Current estimates are that they have ten or more operational nukes." She raised her hand. "Wait, there's more. Iran test fired an IRBM that can reach both Israel and Europe. Biden notched us up to DEFCON 3 and our carrier strike groups have either sailed or are in the process of provisioning in preparation to sail. Shep Smith said that they would all sortie within ten days. He went on to say that all leaves have been cancelled and everyone has been ordered to report back to their home locations. On top of that several Governors have been asked to release the Air National Guard units for federal activation. Apparently many of the assets like tankers and some fighter elements are Air National Guard."

“They are. The ANG has A-10s, B-1Bs and a majority of the tankers. Is there any word on the Washington?”

“It sailed from Yokosuka, destination unknown. Those strike groups already at sea, excluding those in the Persian Gulf area, are steaming for the South China Sea and re-supply ships are meeting them with fuel, food, munitions and other stores, whatever they are.”

“Any word on the B-52s, B-1Bs and the B-2s?”

“Not a peep.”

“The B-1B bombers were originally intended to deliver nuclear weapons. Between '93 and '97 they were all converted to conventional bombers. I've always suspected that it wouldn't take long to restore them to nuclear delivery vehicles and each can carry 24 nuclear bombs. After you ladies decide on the Emergency Essentials order, why don't you get the other things from Costco and Sam's? We'll go shopping for clothing on Saturday.”

“Why now?”

“Look at the shape the country is in. Others might see us a vulnerable. *Those who forget history are condemned to repeat it* according to TOM. Remember what Yamamoto said in the movie 'Tora! Tora! Tora!?' Something like, *I fear that all we have done is awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve.*”

“How do we pay for it?”

“We'll have to find someone to buy a couple of ounces of gold for cash.”

It took Thursday and Friday to finish up the shelter project on the outside. The blast door we'd ordered from American Safe Rooms in Oakland, Oregon had come in we got it to the basement and decided to defer installing it until Monday. We agreed that it would be best to install it in the basement wall rather than the tunnel. It would be a one day job. I mentioned that Helen and I were going shopping for clothing the next day because if something did happen, manufactured goods would become scarce.

While we didn't discuss what each would buy, it was strange how it turned out. All ten of us bought six sets of MultiCam. We already had body armor and the Fritz helmets, specifically the new Marine Lightweight Helmet. On top of that, everyone bought 18 sets of underwear, 36 pairs of white cotton mid-calf crew socks, six pairs of jeans and twelve plain blue work shirts. We also got the matching boonie hats plus patrol caps in MultiCam. And, a civilian head covering, blue baseball caps. The four of us had a multiple year supply of MultiCam and Propper cop clothing.

While we were installing the blast door on Monday, our order from Emergency Essentials arrived. The driver had a forklift on an equipment trailer plus a pallet jack and didn't take very long to unload. We broke for lunch when the door was installed leaving only filling the door with concrete to complete the installation. Before we returned to the basement to finish up, everyone except us loaded their orders into their pickups. We mixed the concrete and filled the door.

"That's done, thanks guys. You might as well go home and put your food away. Helen and I will get ours down to the basement."

"Did you decide how you're going to conceal the blast door?"

"I'll use a storage cabinet anchored to the wall. I was thinking piano hinge and some kind of lock."

"You get the heavy duty piano hinge and I'll be back to help," Bill said.

"Damn."

"What?"

"That's not going to work. The blast door opens outward. There's simply no way to make it work. I won't be able to get the blast door open to release the cabinet lock."

"Hmm, I see what you mean. What the hell, they can't get in so don't worry about it. You can install a steel door at the top of the stairs with two crossbars."

"Won't cost me much more than the cabinet I had in mind. Ok."

I should have realized why Jerry always had his blast doors open inwards. The door frame was only held in place with bolts. Since we'd added the concrete, reversing the door would be a super human task. Besides, the instructions were clear: "It must be installed with the door seated toward the pressure threat (usually outward)."

A form of shock had set in across the US because of the assassination. After the initial rioting and slow restoration of peace by the National Guards and military it became positively calm. There was one exception and that was the Henry Bowman deal that we'd started by taking on the ATF. That developed a life and began to spread. In view of that situation and the fact that it appeared we were moving to a war footing, we decided to stay home and follow the news.

Boeing had restarted production of the Apache helicopters, but none of us got a call asking if we wanted our jobs back. On the other hand, all five of our wives returned to work. In every case, it was enough income to cover the bills, fill the tanks and buy food. We all began to accumulate cash, just in case.

The Trials of George Thomas – Ten

TEOCAWKI:

North Korea crossed the DMZ and made it to Seoul. The Washington Strike Group was in the Yellow Sea and the Reagan Strike Group was in the Sea of Japan. Two additional Strike Groups were sailing to join those ships, the Stennis and the Lincoln. Nimitz had moved to Pearl Harbor and later to Yokosuka. North Korea had announced that it was holding its nuclear arsenal in reserve and threatened to use the weapons against American Forces.

More than 420 fighters, bombers, transport planes, and helicopters had been redeployed in October 1995, and more than 100 aircraft were moved forward to the three air bases near the DMZ. More than 20 Il-28 bombers were moved to Taetan which shortened their arrival time to Seoul from 30 minutes to 10 minutes. Over 80 MiG-17s redeployed to Nuchonri and Kuupri were able to attack Seoul in 6 minutes. By these redeployments North Korea intended to make a first strike with outdated MiG-17s and the second strike with mainstay fighters such as MiG-21s and Su-25s. The North Korean aircraft fleet of Soviet and Chinese manufacture is primarily of 1950s and 1960s technology, with rudimentary avionics and limited weapons systems capability. In the mid- to late 1980s, the Soviet Union supplied a variety of a limited number of more modern all-weather air defense and ground attack aircraft. Most ground attack regiments have older model Soviet and Chinese light bombers and fighters with limited range and combat payloads.

North Korea's missile inventory was limited and consisted primarily SCUD-A, -B and -C. Around 2005, North Korea had revealed a newer longer range SCUD, designated the SCUD-ER with a range of approximately 800 kilometers.

The Korean People's Army operates a very large amount of equipment, including 4,060 tanks, 2,500 APCs, 17,900 artillery pieces, 11,000 air defense guns and some 10,000 MANPADS (SA-16 GIMLET) and anti-tank guided missiles in the Ground force; at least 915 vessels in the Navy and 1,748 aircraft of all types in the Air Force, of which 478 are fighters and 180 are bombers. The fighters included MiG-17, -19, -21, -23, -29, Su-7, -25 and Q-5s bought from China.

A portion of their Air Force was 60 MD-500 gunships bought from the US. They also had 24 Mi-24 Hind. The equipment is a mixture of World War II vintage vehicles and small arms, widely proliferated Cold War technology, and more modern Soviet or locally produced weapons. In line with its asymmetric warfare strategy, North Korea has also developed a wide range of unconventional techniques and equipment, such as GPS jammers, stealth paint, midget submarines and human torpedoes, a vast array of chemical and biological weapons, and anti-personnel lasers. According to official North Korean media, military expenditures for 2010 amounted to 15.8% of the state budget.

Rather than continuing to push south, the North Koreans stopped just past Seoul and continued to bring in additional forces. Attempts to bomb various sites in North Korea were met with great resistance, especially around Pyongyang. Their forces were well trained in the use of the MANPADS and many F/A-18s from our carriers were shot down. The missiles were equally effective on aircraft launched from South Korea, be they South Korean aircraft or American aircraft. The most recent additions to the ROKAF had been 61 F-15Ks, an upgraded Strike Eagle. Previously, they had bought 12 F-16s and license produced an additional 148.

The defending parties resorted to using Tomahawk cruise missiles in the -C, -D and -E configurations. They were launched from Cruisers, Destroyers and Submarines. Replacement supplies of the missiles were available at Yokosuka allowing a continuous, random patterned attack. The -C and -E models had a unitary warhead and the -D delivered submunitions which each contained smaller submunitions.

At this point in the battle, China was taking a hands-off policy. Instead, they introduced a strongly worded motion at the Security Council condemning the United States and Japan for supporting South Korea. It's a good thing that John Bolton wasn't our representative in the UN. Bolton was part of the State Department's delegation to six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear program in 2003. He was removed from the delegation after describing Kim Jong-il as a "tyrannical dictator" and saying that, for North Koreans under Kim's rule, "life is a hellish nightmare." In response, a North Korean spokesman said "such human scum and bloodsucker is not entitled to take part in the talks." Congressional Democrats argued that Bolton's words at the time were undiplomatic and endangered the talks.

"This could go nuclear at any time."

"I doubt that George. First, China would have to get openly involved. Even then, they don't really have enough delivery vehicles to do all that much to our country. What do they have, twenty D-5s and an unknown number of DF-31s, DF-31As and DF-41s?"

"Just because they don't publish their test results or production figures doesn't mean they don't have operational DF-41s, Bill. I've read about those missiles and they're about the same as our Minuteman III. It's a very poor idea to underestimate the capacity of your enemy."

"Did you catch the story on CNN?"

"I don't listen to CNN or CBS except for their entertainment programs. What was it about?"

"Biden stopped the precious metal recall because too many ATF agents and Congress critters were being killed. He also put a hold on firearm confiscation except when it's involved in a crime."

“Really? It’s been quite the ride Bill. Less than a year back we had rioting in the streets, a President in a coma and an invasion along our southern border. Here we are today worried about World War III and in between the two we had a precious metal recall and orders to surrender our assault weapons. What’s next, Clarence’s rock popping out from behind the sun?”

“You tell me George, you’re the one that says China has more rockets than we think.”

“That rock thing was a joke, I think. In my opinion, it will remain conventional until someone gets desperate and uses a nuke. You don’t want that because when that happens, it’s Katy, bar the door. If I had to guess, I’d put my money on Kim getting his butt kicked and using nukes on South Korea. We would respond to that with TLAM-Ns against the north and that could get China involved. They shoot everything they have that can reach us at us and those that can’t at India and Pakistan.”

“So you’re saying a GTW?”

“It’s possible and has been since 1962. What I think we should do will take some money, but not really a lot. Instead of buying our LTS foods, we should buy in bulk and package them ourselves. The standard grains like corn, wheat and oats. Maybe buy beans in bulk too if everyone is willing to consider a trip to the Dakotas. Rice is available in bulk too, in the Sacramento Valley. Personally, I prefer to buy it from Costco, a few hundred pounds at a time. We can dehydrate fruits and can vegetables or dehydrate them too. What do you think?”

“I think it sounds like a lot of work. We’d have to get the others aboard for this, too. Do you think we could save enough to cover the cost of fuel to go hither and yon?”

“It would probably be a tradeoff. Some things are available locally and others would require a trip. The thing about it is that if we go, we can get the quantities we’d need to keep us in food for a very long time. In some ways some of us went at this backwards. Think about it, the priorities are: air, shelter, water, food and a means of protection in order of importance.”

“We have several years’ worth of supplies, George!”

“More is always better if we can acquire it. It’s true that we can’t spend ourselves into the poor house, but what if we do have a GTW and it is followed by a Nuclear Winter and a climate change?”

“So let’s talk to Manny, Moe and Jack.”

“You mean Manny, Joe and Sam?”

“Yeah! Same difference. They always remind me of the Pep Boys.”

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“It’s not that we don’t like the idea. Things are really up in the air at the moment in the Far East. I, for one, would hate to be caught that far from home if the balloon did go up. Could we contact the producers and have the goods shipped?”

“We’re talking a pickup load, not truck loads, Manny. Where would we store several truckloads of grain, beans and rice?”

“We can get the beans and rice at Costco.”

“Only Pinto beans. George said he preferred their Jasmine rice anyway and was going to get his rice there.”

“How about Sam’s Club? They carry large bags of other kinds of beans including navy, great northern and kidney. That would leave only the corn, wheat and oats. I’d be more than willing to drive up to Idaho and fill in some odds and ends if we needed that. We’ll get the Mylar bags, a sealer and oxygen absorbers and the two of you could try to find pails. If we called ahead and ordered for pickup on a specific day, we could drive up and back nonstop. Two days max if we went that way. The three of us could go and you two could take care of things here. Get plenty of coffee, tea, Charmin and so forth. Don’t forget pasta and pasta sauce. Get at least 15 cases of the sauce, just in case.”

“Ok if we substitute tomato paste and tomato sauce if they don’t have enough pasta sauce?”

“That’s probably a good idea whether you get the pasta sauce or not. Yeah, clean ‘em out or buy as much as they will allow. Hit every Sam’s and Costco until you start to run out of money. I’ll place the order with Walton in a few minutes for pickup day after tomorrow.”

While they were on the road, Bill and I hit the Costco stores followed by the Sam’s Clubs. We had to convert some gold, oh well. You can get six hundred pounds of rice on a flat before it is too heavy to push and starts to slide around. Two stores times two per was four pallets of Folgers. Due to our limited funds, we only bought ground beef, hams, bacon and whole chickens. We’d have four or more days each week as meatless days using protein substitutes like beans, etc. Costco has fourteen locations in the greater Phoenix area. Despite the general concern in Phoenix, we weren’t limited on available goods; we were limited on available funds.

After returning home to unload, we hit the Sam’s Clubs in the greater Phoenix area. There are only ten Sam’s Clubs in the greater Phoenix area. We filled both pickups and one trailer. It was well after dark before we had everything unloaded. Susan came to our house with Helen since she knew Bill was with me. Bill and I had a prepared dish in the oven cooking, a Mrs. Stouffer’s lasagna. The side dish was Texas Toast smeared with

butter on both sides and a liberal coat of garlic powder on the top. We'd start the garlic bread on a griddle and finish it in the oven so both sides would be toasted.

The Pep Boys had a trip of slightly over 800 miles and MSN maps said it was a 12.5 hour drive. They left around noon and said it would probably take more like 15 hours with stops. They should hit Montpelier around 3 am and be at Walton's when they opened the doors. Manny allowed two hours for loading and another 15 hours for the return trip. They'd take turns driving and whoever drove last would nap until they changed drivers again, either at fuel stops or bathroom breaks.

We had all of our tasks completed the first day, except for finding empty 5 and 6 gallon food pails. I think we hit 100 or more donut shops and any other place we could think of that got raw product in 5 gallon food grade pails. Once done, we unloaded the pickup and trailer and set about rewashing the pails and allowing them to air dry, inverted. All five wives got together after work the second night and made a supply run of their own getting personal supplies and cold weather clothing. When they returned, Helen and Susan suggested that Bill and I do the same and told us where we could find what we needed. Right, they sell arctic parkas in Phoenix.

Actually, it turned out that they were available, in ski shops. Using the last of our dwindling supply of funds, we bought surplus military N3B parkas with fur hoods and more modern Columbia Sportswear. We also picked up surplus military B3A gloves with the woolen inside glove and leather outside glove.

"I think as soon as they get back from Idaho, we'll be set. Marilyn, Cassandra and Julia went ahead and got them the arctic bibs and N3B parkas. Where did you find the gloves?"

"The surplus store where we found the parkas."

"I'll call and let Cass know. When will they be back?"

"They left at noon yesterday. It's about 32 hours round trip so about eight this evening as long as they didn't have any trouble."

"Have either of you been following the news?"

"Fraid not, we've both been busier than one armed paper hangers. We did complete all the tasks assigned to us. We have 2,400 pounds of rice, a pallet of pinto beans, four pallets of Folgers, chickens, ham, bacon and ground beef plus quite a bit of canned meat from Costco. We got pasta by the case plus pasta sauce, tomato sauce, tomato paste and assorted beans from Sam's. They had small and large white beans plus kidney beans so we can make chili until we can't stand to look at it. Oh, all kinds of mixes like pancake mix and so forth plus a load of Aunt Jemima."

“Turn on the news and see what’s happening in the Far East. Susan and I will finish up supper and dish it up.”

“You want a drink Bill? Jack and water?”

“On the rocks?”

“Sure. I’ll stick with my Jack and Squirt.”

When I returned with the drinks, Bill raised his hand to silence me. He had Fox on and they had their Breaking News banner displayed. I handed him his drink and set down to listen. Harris Faulkner was substituting for Sean Hannity. She was reading the teleprompter and was reporting that North Korea had fired anti-ship cruise missiles against the four Carriers. The missiles were intercepted by a combination of missiles fired by the Destroyers, Cruisers and Carriers. The Carriers had fired RIM-116 RAMs and the Destroyers and Cruisers fired RIM-66 SM-2s.

She then raised an interesting question. Why, she wondered, had North Korea fired a single missile at each strike group? Bill and I looked at each other and smirked. Were we to guess, we were both thinking the same thing, those missiles were nuclear tipped and either KN-01 anti-ship cruise missiles which is a new version of the SS-N-1- Styx which had its range upgraded or the KN-02, an upgraded version of the Russian SS-21, with a longer range.

Shooting the missiles down had prevented nuclear detonations if, indeed, the missiles had nuclear warheads. The KN-01 was a turbojet missile while the TN-02 was a solid propellant missile. With each missile having a range of ~110 km, they must have been launched at sea.

The trio arrived from Idaho around 7:30 pm and dropped the loads at our house. They said they’d return the following morning early to divide everything up. All three looked like they’d been rode hard and put up wet. Rather than unloading, I let them take my pickup. The load was tarped in case of rain. We took turns unloading, sorting and re-loading our latest acquisitions with one of us taking turns monitoring the news.

The US launched several flights of Wild Weasels ahead of the next bombing strikes and obliterated a substantial portion of the North Korean anti-aircraft sites. The next series of bombing strikes was conducted using B-2 Spirits and F-117 Nighthawks followed up with low level fast moving B-1B Lancer bomber strikes, all flying from Japan.

Apparently, that was the last straw for the North Koreans and they launched their remaining five nuclear warheads on IRBMs striking selected targets in South Korea. The US responded immediately with TLAM-Ns bringing the war to a swift conclusion, or so it seemed. Thirty-six hours later, China launched its full fleet of IRBMs against India and Pakistan and their ICBMs against the US. We had about 25 minutes warning from our NOAA radios and were sheltered well ahead of the incoming strikes. Strangely, Russia

launched on China citing their close ties with India as a principal buyer of their military hardware, and no other countries.

Biden retaliated against China as soon as the launches were confirmed and waited to launch on Russia until they launched on us. China had 20 ICBMs that could reach the US. Limited as they were, they selected geological targets with the exception of Washington, New York and Los Angeles. The latter three were targeted with MIRVs while the former were targeted with 5mT warheads. It was an interesting mix of targets, in addition to the three cities mentioned, the Puget Sound, the San Diego Naval facilities, Yellowstone, Long Valley, three volcanoes in the Cascades, the San Andreas Fault, the Cascadian Subduction Zone, the New Madrid Seismic Zone, and some targets that defied logic and probably belonging in the cities group, Detroit and Toledo. Two missiles exploded on launch and three others missed their targets, landing far from any suspected target.

The geological targets reacted violently to the outside force, faults slipped and the volcanoes erupted. Of all the targets, the one that would affect us the most was Long Valley plus some fallout from Los Angeles and San Diego. San Diego would probably affect Tucson more than Phoenix and Los Angeles would affect Phoenix more than Tucson. Long Valley would be wind driven and could affect either or both. For whatever reason most of the eastern US had been spared.

Responses around the world were mixed. India and Pakistan exchanged their remaining weapons while France and the United Kingdom remained out of the fray. Israel attacked everyone in the Middle East. Their Jericho II and III missiles could be conventionally or nuclear tipped and the latter could reach North America and Australia and all points in between. Coupled with the missiles was a large compliment of fighter delivered nukes. Enough to give any potential opponent pause before attacking the country. There was no nuclear ambiguity remaining. The Iranian SAMs were eliminated by the Jericho III missiles aimed at their nuclear facilities.

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When it became apparent that China had used up its missiles, we got together on our low range business band radios and discussed the possibilities. We weren't limited to the low band having a separate set of VHF radios, UHF radios plus CBs and amateur band radios. Our radio shacks were crowded with base stations and mobile radios run off DC power supplies. Since most of us were limited by CCRs on radio towers, we had towers that could be raised and lowered plus bent over to permit repairs to the antennas and coax.

Since the low band business radios were probably the most secure next to SINCGARS, they were our primary means of communication. We couldn't locate SINCGARS at Camp Navajo. It's about 400 miles from LA to Phoenix and with a wind speed of 10mph, the fallout would take about 40 hours to reach us.

Bill and I had the Quiet Diesel 12.5 commercial generators to back up our PV panels. Manny had the non-commercial in his motor home and the other two, PV panels. Manny had done his best to keep diesel fuel on hand for his generator and had one buried 1,000 gallon tank of stabilized fuel with a fuel pump to transfer fuel to the tank in his motorhome.

Bill and I had each purchased, years before, two 3,300 gallon propane tanks and buried them. We never used the propane because of the availability of natural gas. Next to the propane tank was the other tank filled with diesel and equipped with an electrical powered pump.

The radiation peaked in our area at a fairly low level, 38R which was right on the money for 3,000R 40 hours previously per the 7/10 rule. It didn't look like the AMP 200 would come out of the cabinet.

The anticipated Global Thermonuclear War became, instead, a Thermonuclear War with six participants, China, Israel, the United States, Pakistan, India and Russia. Tens/Hundreds of Millions rather than billions died, at least in the beginning. Along with the radioactive fallout came a second type of fallout, volcanic ash, literally by the ton. By mutual agreement, our five families added additional pre-filters to our air systems to prevent the microscopic ash from invading our shelters. Because the pre-filter was the least expensive of the three filters, Helen and I had several allowing us to change ours frequently.

"Would you look at that?"

"Look at what?"

"The outside temperature reading, it's barely above freezing."

We had a Weather Wizard III that didn't include the optional Rain Collector II because it rained so seldom. Neither did it measure barometric pressure. It was a hard wired system that we had to keep disconnected and stored in the cabinet except when we were in the shelter. Our older system provided similar data for our home. I never saw a gadget I didn't like and the only thing worse was our collection of firearms.

At our next scheduled contact, I brought up the lower temperature. "We're reading right at freezing here, How about the rest of you?"

"Same here," Bill replied. "Manny, you have a weather system, are you getting the same results?"

"Baby, it's cold outside!"

I came back with, "Can't see squat on our cameras. Anyone else besides Bill have a closed circuit TV camera?"

“Can’t see anything here,” Bill replied.

“I do,” Joe said. “Either it’s not working or it’s as dark as a coal mine out there. Do you think it’s ash from Yellowstone, Long Valley or both?”

“According to the map in that Yellowstone paper I downloaded, it could be either or both. Arizona was hit with ash from all of the eruptions except for the Mesa Falls eruption. That was the second of the three from Yellowstone.”

“Those are the names of the tuffs, not the caldera that produced them.”

“True, but who cares about the Calderas, they’re in Idaho and Wyoming. The ash, on the other hand is here.”

We had no way of knowing that the Chinese had planted a 5mT bomb when the trouble started between North and South Korea. The bomb was planted in the Canary Islands on the island named La Palma. The southern part of La Palma is dominated by the Cumbre Vieja, a volcanic ridge formed by numerous volcanic cones built of lava and scoria. The Cumbre Vieja is active – but dormant, with the last eruption occurring in 1971 at the Teneguia vent which is located at the southern end of the Cumbre Vieja – Punte de Fuencaliente, (The Point of the Hot Fountain). During the 1949 eruption from the Duraznero, San Juan, and Hoyo Negro vents on the Cumbre Vieja, an earthquake, with an epicenter near Jedy, occurred. This caused a 2.5 kilometer (1.55 mile) long rift to open, with a width of about a meter and a depth of about two meters.

Most people became aware of the rift when BBC Discovery aired a program titled Mega Tsunami during 2000. During the years following, there had been much speculation about the possibility of a Mega Tsunami and while fiction authors had included it in their scenarios concerning TEOTWAWKI, TEOCAWKI and so forth, many in the scientific community largely dismissed the possibility. Of course they failed to consider someone actually planting a 5mT nuke in that small rift. When the nuke exploded, the rift was no longer small and the fears expressed back in 2000 became fact.

Locally, the tsunami was over 600 meters high. As it spread, the height fell and it was a mere 100 meters when it hit our eastern continental shelf. The shelf caused it to stack up to about 200 meters (~656 feet). The waters raced inland scouring the land back to bare soil and rock. It completely washed the Florida peninsula clean. I guess those New Yorkers should have retired to Texas. We only knew because Sam had picked up a transmission from Montgomery, Alabama on his radio.

The Chinese, in their rush, had failed to detonate a HEMP device and our communications weren’t totally down except where they had targeted a nuke or nukes. There was some interference from the ionized fallout but it was rather insignificant and we were able to punch through it.

And, man, were we prepared! We'd been at it since the '80s and even had Mountain House beef steaks and pork chops. It had been a good ~35 years' worth of preparations to get where we were. The list of what we wanted to do still had several items on it including a greenhouse. Maybe we should have done that rather than the swimming pool. It's pretty hard to live in Phoenix without a pool. So soon we get old and so late we get smart. At least we still had our firearms allowing us to protect what we had.

We had a fair amount of time in the shelter and Helen and I began to recount the events of the recent years. The economy had gone south and that had forced the price of gold and silver to rise to near astronomical levels. We just plain got lucky on that, buying most of ours after 9/11.

We had a war in Afghanistan that seemed like it would never end and George decided to get Saddam. At least that mostly ended in eight years. The population as a whole had been fed up with business as usual in Washington and had elected the guy calling for 'change' in November of 2008. It was a change all right; the new President was a democrat and black. Mid-way through his first term, he was assassinated putting the Vice President in charge. He was anti everything that a substantial portion of the population valued, including precious metals and firearms. The sniper missed him.

The claim was made that collection of firearms pertained to the violence resulting from the assassination. In the same frame of mind, the claim was made that the precious metal recall was necessary due to the amount of debt the country had. Those two mandates were reversed when the American public revolted and began killing federal employees.

It had been calm after that until North Korea decided to cancel the 1953 cease fire. When they began to lose, they released their nukes and our country retaliated. Having grown to a major military power, even to the extent of having its own stealth fighter, the J-20, China used its ICBMs on the US and IRBMs on India and Pakistan. We actually had no idea where their three SSBNs that were carrying a total of 36 nuclear tipped missiles were. They had one type-92 Xia and two type-94 Jin. The Jin carried their JL-2 missile and the Xia their JL-1 missile. A comparison I made between Wiki and Sino Defense gave different information about the JL-2 missile with the more conservative information coming from Sino Defense.

Our small group had used our time effectively and not only connected our shelter to the basement; we'd managed to acquire all the additional food the group could afford. It was close to a lifetime supply given our ages and the probability that not all of the group would survive the coming days. It was going to be tough being a have rather than a have not. It was indeed fortunate that we'd been able to get supplies from Costco, Sam's and Walton. It would appear that we wouldn't be growing much of our own food for some time to come without a greenhouse.

"Are we going to try salvaging once we can get out and about?"

“That’s good question. I’ll go along with the rest of you,” I replied.

“I’m going to need diesel and propane sometime in the next six months.”

“Make that two.”

“Three.”

“Sounds like a majority to me Bill. You started this, what’s your vote?”

“I’m for it. We’ll need gasoline and diesel and those PRI stabilizers. Propane doesn’t require stabilizers but who knows how long it will be before someone can resume deliveries? I say we get a tanker with a mixed load of 75% diesel and 25% gas or better yet, 12.5% gas and 87.5% diesel. I doubt we can find propane tankers so we’ll probably have to settle on delivery trucks. Our first stop should be to get a three phase generator or alternator to power the fuel pumps.”

“Anyone have an idea where we might find the stabilizers?”

“The fuel distributors would be a good place to look.”

“You know, if we can get enough PV panels we won’t need as much fuel for our generators. I’d put finding them at the top of our list. Another thing we should try to find is one or more medium to large greenhouses.”

“Know where to look Sam?”

“Yeah, the Yellow Pages.”

“Everybody check it out and we’ll discuss it during our six PM discussion.”

“Bill out.”

Sam out.”

“Manny out.”

Joe out.”

“George out.”

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“This is Manny. There’s a bunch in Apache Junction.”

“Rog. Manny, I found one in Scottsdale.”

“Bill here. There are at least six listed in Phoenix.”

“This is Sam. I have the books for the outlying cities west of Phoenix. There must be a dozen all combined.”

“Sorry, I couldn’t find our Yellow Pages,” Joe added.

“What’s the visibility like out there Joe?”

“About 100.”

“Feet?”

“Inches.”

“Eight feet?”

“Maybe a little more, I can just see the tree in the front yard and it’s about ten feet from the camera.”

“Anyone remember seeing the TV picture from Yakima right after Mt. St. Helens?”

“What does that have to do with this?”

“Joe do you remember?”

“Yep. We aren’t there yet. Maybe another day or two. ‘Sides, ain’t nobody going out until the fallout radiation level is lower.”

“Right, I’m reading around 6 Rads which is right on the money for seven days.”

“You have the spreadsheet?”

“I have both Jerry’s and Tom’s. I bought the CD.”

“What’s Jerry’s do?”

“Computes the protection factor of a shelter. TOM’s computes the wait time until it’s safe to exit based on the calculated level of the detonation and the elapsed time.

“You know, guys, you determine the location of the blast and the elapsed time since the blast and plug in your estimates until your reading and the spreadsheet’s are the same. I started with 3,000 and it worked. We had about 38 Rads 40 hours after the nuke went off in LA and with an average wind speed of 10 miles per hour, it all fits almost perfectly for a 3,000 Rad detonation 40 hours earlier.”

“Speaking of LA, how do you think TOM is making out?”

“He’s probably up at Barstow trying to figure out how to get into the igloos and cop some LAW rockets and hand grenades. Jerry lives in Reno and I don’t know which volcanoes they nuked. He could be holed up out in Winnemucca. Most of the Nevada based stories involved Winnemucca or Elko.”

“All I can say is TOM has better taste in rifles than Jerry.”

“Six of one and a half dozen of the other. Both the M1A and PTR-91 are piston driven 7.62x51mm rifles. TOM says he has small hands and can’t hold a P-14. I’m not so sure that PT1911 he got was the best choice, he could have gotten a Glock 21 cheaper.”

“I’ve been following Fleataxi, TOM and Jerry since they began posting on Frugal’s. TOM and Fleataxi were going head to head over shotguns. TOM liked the 870 and Fleataxi the 590. You noticed what TOM bought, didn’t you? A 590A1! I don’t know how he came to decide on the Taurus. Maybe someone on Frugal’s put a bug in his ear.”

“He can’t be in Barstow!”

“Why not?”

“He doesn’t have a driver’s license.”

“Do you think he forgot how to drive when he gave up his license?”

“Oh. Well...probably not.”

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Not. I’m here behind my keyboard creating this repetitious story. And I can still drive, just not legally; I backed up the car for Sharon back in 2006; a whole five feet.

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“How long?”

“Until we can go out?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, you can go out any time after the ash clears. However the radiation level won’t drop to 100mR until about 8 months from the time of the detonation. The maximum allowable dose is 300R in 120 days which averages out to 2.5R per day.”

“That’s only 2½ hours if the level is 1R.”

“Oh, a math professor, huh? Well professor that’s 5 hours when it’s down to ½R per hour and 10 hours when it’s down to ¼R per hour and...”

“I get it, I get it.”

“When will it be ½R per hour? What about ¼R per hour?”

“One half at about 60 days and one quarter at about 120 days.”

“I vote for going out for the diesel fuel at 60 days. We can wait until 120 days to look for propane and even longer to locate greenhouses. If the temperature and the amount of ash in the air is any indication, we’ll need more than just greenhouses. We need a heating system and some kind of grow lights; which means we’ll need a separate generator for each greenhouse and fuel for the generator.”

“We won’t know what size of generator we need until we get the greenhouses and decide on the number of grow lights needed.”

“Well then we get the fuel followed by the greenhouses and necessary accessories including the lights, fixtures, heaters and generators. Then, we’ll get the propane.”

“Wouldn’t it be better to divide our efforts? For instance, get the three phase generator and mount it on a trailer or maybe get one of the rental units we can tow from site to site. Then we divide up in to two teams with the three of you on one and George and me on the other. You line out the fuel and we’ll look for the greenhouses. Once we find five greenhouses large enough for our needs, we can help you with the fuel if you haven’t finished and you can help us move the greenhouses. Before we start the assembly, we can locate the light fixtures, bulbs, switches and what not. We can also locate heaters, probably propane if we can find them,

“Next, we get five filled propane delivery trucks and we have everything we need except the generators. We can get those next or after the greenhouses are erected. I lean towards accumulating the supplies before we begin construction. We can start one of yours and then do one of ours and switch back and forth until we have all five assembled, wired and heated. How does that sound?”

“I’m in.”

“Me too.”

“Yeah, that will work.”

“I’m with you Bill.”

Manny chuckled.

“We’ll start when the radiation is below 500mR and limit our exposure to 2.5R per day. We’re all middle aged and if we do get cancer, it shouldn’t be until twenty years or later. It’s not like we’re just starting our families. Has anyone been able to contact their families?”

“Not yet, but it’s still early.”

“Ok, 8 am tomorrow.”

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“George, I need to do laundry.”

“Let me check the basement. If it’s still a little hot, I’ll do the washing and drying and you can do the hanging and folding.”

“Did you switch over the water to the well and the sewer to the septic?”

“Yes, just before we entered the shelter. I also checked the batteries and topped off any that needed it. The generator will kick in to supplement the power for the dryer.”

“I just realized what a pain in the behind it is to have a mostly electric home.”

“It won’t take long to convert the dryer to propane. I’ll wait on the kitchen stove until we’re ready to move back in the house. I just wish we’d been able to surround the exterior of the house with a Skousen wall.”

“What is a Skousen wall?”

“Basically, you pour footings beyond the existing walls and erect 2x6 steel framing covered with plywood on the exterior. The space between the outer wall and house wall is filled with gravel no larger than $\frac{3}{4}$ ”. You can then apply an exterior treatment in front of the plywood. You can use brick, more solid concrete block and even stucco. To protect the windows you add external shutters of either armored plate or high strength steel. To conceal the steel shutters, you laminate plywood to both sides. At the minimum, you’ve added several inches of additional protection. While the house isn’t totally bullet proof in most cases, I think ours might be because of the 8” solid concrete block original exterior. Got that from Jerry and did a little research.”

“If you have both roll down aluminum shutters and armored shutters on top of that, it would cause a problem. It wouldn’t be cheap.”

“Right, that’s why I didn’t bring it up. Although the expense was spread over 25 years, what we did manage to complete wasn’t cheap by any stretch of the imagination.”

“You guys will be careful when you start getting out and about, won’t you?”

“You can take that to the bank.”

“Good, the balance is getting low.”

“I doubt paper money is worth the paper it’s printed on. We have three thousand dollars face value in uncirculated pre-65 silver, one bag of each denomination. Each bag contains ~723 ounces of silver. Plus we have 100 ounces of each of the four denominations of the US Gold Eagles and 300 ounces of one ounce Silver Eagles, less the gold I spent on those night scopes. That’s not counting the truly junk silver.

“What’s that worth and are we going to have trouble?”

“The coins probably are worth a million or more. As soon as others figure out we have food stored, we’ll have trouble without a doubt. It’s not like we lack the firepower to hold them at bay and there is no way they can drive us out by laying siege. We’re going to have to come up with something to avoid the trouble.”

Of course the gold was bought for less than \$300 an ounce and the silver for about \$4 an ounce excluding minting costs and excluding the uncirculated 90% silver coins. That silver cost them \$1.38 an ounce. Dad and Mom bought them at face value and they were put up for ‘a rainy day’. They weren’t mentioned in the will and I discretely recovered them from Dad’s hiding place. As you know, the gold and silver bullion coins came after 9/11.

They’ve been gone for several years. Dad ran a red light and they were T-boned. Both of them and the driver of the other car were killed. Both drivers were at fault, Dad ran the red light and the other driver was going over sixty in a 25mph zone. Apparently he didn’t see them since there were no skid marks. Helen’s story was just as sad, but much different. Her mother had died of ovarian cancer after her dad had divorced her. Her father had married the bimbo he’d been running around with and about two years later, the bimbo had stabbed her father during an argument. She just walked off, never to be seen again. Her father bled to death in only a few minutes, the chef’s knife scraping along the bottom of his ribcage and severing several arteries and veins.

Our childlessness was a combination of factors. Helen only had one functioning ovary and I had been exposed to something, sometime, that resulted in an extremely low sperm count. Not only were the critters few and far between, those that existed didn’t have much life. We stopped worrying about it and went on with our lives, eliminating that stress. Stress is one of dozens of factors that affect reproductive capacity.

The Trials of George Thomas – Eleven

Aftermath:

The ash tapered off much faster than the radiation decayed. At sixty days, we started going out, limiting our exposure to two Rads per day. The radiation continued to decay and by one hundred days, it was down to 300mR. Around six months after the strike, the level had fallen to a shade below 150mR and it finally hit 100mR at during the eighth month.

We prioritized our activities and never did anything as an individual. As suggested, there was one team of three and one of two. They got the generator and we all worked on getting the fuel. It was a problem at first because of the limited amount of time we allowed ourselves due to the fallout. They had a towable 60kw, 3 phase diesel generator. By the time we found decent sized greenhouses, the other team had loaded and transported a double tanker with a mixed load to each location with 12.5% gasoline and 87.5% #2 diesel fuel. They also rounded up enough PRI-G and PRI-D to keep our fuel fresh for years.

We strictly followed the guidelines of 2R per day and as the fallout decayed, we had more and more time to spend on our activities. The first greenhouse had taken 3 days to load, deliver and unload. The second, a bit less, but close to 3 days and the last still took three days but we actually had time to sit down and read the plans and assembly instructions. They were large greenhouses, for hobby greenhouses, but not quite up to commercial size.

“I say we put off erecting these things until the fallout has decayed more. We’ve had a fair amount of exposure as it is and we still need to find the light fixtures, bulbs, wiring and five more generators. Now, that’s the easy part; we stashed six 12.5kw gensets when we picked up the three phase unit. They’re all 1,800rpm diesel units and there were a ton or two of filters, not to mention repair parts. They’re the 12.5kw Quiet Diesel rated at 100 amps and run at 1,800rpm. Good thing the filters are all the same, I have a bunch.”

“What do you want to do Manny, the greenhouse lights and heaters or the propane?”

“Propane first, I think. It would be nice to find a bunch of large tanks sitting around somewhere so we could have tanks that would hold a 3,000 gallon truckload.”

“I can help there,” Bill said, “and so can George. We have each a pair of 3,300 gallon tanks. One is filled with 3,000 gallons of propane and the other with 3,300 gallons of diesel. We both know where to look for the tanks.”

“Hot damn, we’ll get all we can find that are 550s. Can’t really have too much fuel storage.”

“Actually, Manny, you can. It would sure be tough if you got into a firefight and someone put a hole in your above ground propane tank. Best bury the propane.”

“No sweat, I know where we can get an excavator! Only this time, maybe we’ll just keep it for other projects.”

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“When are we getting out of the shelter?”

“At eight and three quarters months.”

“Hogwash, the five of you have been going out for weeks.”

“And we’ve been accumulating a dose of radiation. Might end up with cancer someday.”

“Bull. I don’t want to live one day longer than you. I can run the same risk and so can the other four wives. We’ve been talking and right about now, I expect each man is getting an earful from his woman. All ten of us are equipped the same except for some minor body parts and our underclothes. Somehow, I can’t picture you men in a bras and panties.”

“All that is left to do until the radiation falls to a safe level is to get some propane tanks, bury them and fill them with propane. The generators are already set aside and we just have to pick them up along with supplies. There is the lighting for the greenhouses but we won’t need that until the greenhouses are erected after it’s safe to go out full time.”

“And, if we five work on something like the lighting and propane greenhouse heaters, it will reduce the exposure all five of you will get.”

“I’m not going to win this argument, am I?”

“You can win it. Are you sure you want to pay the price? That love seat is pretty short and isn’t very comfortable, is it?”

“I’ll talk to the guys.”

“Don’t bother; they’ve already been worked over pretty good by now. You were the last to get home and Bill the next to last. MultiCam, right?”

“Right, MultiCam.”

That is how the ladies joined our little salvage operation. The conversations no doubt varied from home to home. Nevertheless, all five of the wives went out the next day. They went for the heaters and lighting. The five of us picked up the generators, filters

and spare parts. We also picked up about 50 55-gallon drums of oil, a little here and a little there. Phoenix is a large area!

The first day while we moved the generators, they got light fixtures and bulbs. The second day while we got the filters and oil, they got the wiring, switches, boxes and covers. The following day, we went looking for the propane tanks and hit pay dirt. It would take two days to haul all of the 3,300 gallon tanks, even using a semi and flatbed. We attached an equipment trailer to haul a forklift around to unload the tanks. On the third day, they had the propane heaters early on and went shopping at Dillard's.

"Shopping at Dillard's? Are you out of your minds?"

"It was still locked up and we decided on the spur of the moment to get a few manufactured goods. I'll wear one of the outfits I got tonight."

"At Dillard's?"

"There was a Victoria's Secret in the same mall."

What can I say? If I'm smart, I won't say anything. It seemed like everyone was smiling the next day. We dug excavations for the propane tanks and buried them over the next five day period. We didn't bother with diesel tanks since the tankers served the same purpose. They were installed according to the code we picked up at the location where we found the tanks. X number of feet from the property lines, X number of feet from ignition sources, X number of feet from the residences, etc. We ended up hauling off a few dump trucks worth of soil. We only kept enough to raise our back yards a few inches and level them. The fuel tankers were connected directly to the diesel tanks and we looked for and found 500 gallon farm tanks for the gasoline.

It seems that Sam and Joe were hung up on the PV panel idea and during the evenings, they went looking. It wasn't hard for them to find them; they already knew where to go. They said the next to hardest thing they had to do was breaking into the warehouse. The hardest thing had been hauling the panels, batteries, charge controllers, inverters and cable to the truck they were using. It was a 40' box trailer and, if I'm any kind of judge, it was overloaded.

The Xantrex XW model 6048 Inverter/Chargers combined with the XW Power Distribution Panel, the XW Solar Charge Controllers, the 300w, 30 volt Schott 235 PV panels (made in New Mexico) and the batteries. The 6048 would accept an input voltage between 44 and 64vdc. The batteries were Surrrette 6-CS-21P AGM 6 volt batteries. I mean to tell you, they have everything needed to set up a solar array at each location and we could combine it with our existing systems, if we had one, power the greenhouses or even put the panels on our roofs and switch from generator power to solar power (Manny).

“Have you added up your exposure recently?”

“Haven’t had time.”

“I took the time. You’re grounded.”

“Like hell!”

“One hundred sixty four Rads. Check my math. You made the daily entries from your dosimeter. Since it’s a CD V-742, you could be off too. They have a full range of 200R. Did you round up or down?”

“Uh...”

“You were tired and just rounded off; I know you and the way you act. You don’t seem to have any symptoms like bloody gums or your hair falling out; although since you wear a butch, who knows? Once the radiation is down to 100mR or lower, you can go out and play with your friends.”

Go out and play with my friends??? It’s going to take five weeks to assemble five greenhouses. Then they have to have the light fixtures installed and wired and the bulbs inserted. The wiring has to be run to the switch boxes and the switch boxes have to be connected to a permanent power source. That only leaves placing the propane heater and hooking it up and I’ll probably have to put in an outlet to power the fan on the thing. Oh, wait... the tables; I’m sure you will want tables to hold everything at about 30” above the floor. Maybe make the tables 48” wide and put in four columns, front to back. The greenhouse is 360” wide so we can put in 5 aisles about 33” wide. It’s also 60’ long so I can make the tablets 56’ long and leave a 4’ aisle across the front. No wasted space that way and no sawing plywood. I’d better use 4x4s ‘cause that dirt is going to be heavy.

“What did you say?”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You were mumbling. Something about plywood and 4x4s and dirt being heavy.”

“I didn’t realize I was thinking out loud. I was thinking about the greenhouse. You’re going to want tables and I figured if I had them 4’ wide and 56’ long you have an aisle 33” wide between tables and 48” wide at the front. Seven sheets of plywood are 56’ by 4’ and I wouldn’t have to saw anything.”

“Where are you going to put the hose connections? We’re going to have to water the plants.”

“Let me think about it.”

“Before you get too far into never-never-land, consider this. I think we should have boxes on the top of the tables. About 4’ wide, 8’ long and 12” deep. We can fill the boxes with a mix of soil, sand and vermiculite. Or, we can clean out the potting soil from a couple of large department stores like Wal-Mart. It’s premixed and not that heavy. While we’re at it, you can get some of the composed manure for fertilizer.”

“Are you going green?”

“I think natural is better than the chemicals they use now. Let’s face it; Miracle-Gro didn’t keep James Whitmore alive. (He died in 2009)

“It just seems like the older we get the more of our favorite entertainers die.”

“What do you expect, they grow old too.”

“Since it’s not heavy, why don’t you five Ladies gather it up? While you’re at it, get all of the 4x4s, $\frac{3}{4}$ ” plywood and 2x12s you can find. Oh, and get some tarps to cover everything until it’s needed.”

I explained to the four other guys that I was grounded until my average radiation dose fell to 2.5R per day. It wouldn’t take long, maybe two weeks. Helen then got on the radio and spoke with the other wives, explaining what they needed to do. Marilyn suggested getting a truck from a lumberyard and to start with the wood. They all agreed to meet at our house. Helen said she’d put on a pot of coffee and another for tea. When they arrived, I made the mistake of making my presence known.

“Has Georgy been a bad boy? Shame on you.”

I made a hasty retreat. In the days, weeks, months and year(s) following the assassination, the ten of us had undergone several changes. One of the most obvious was the loss of every ounce of excess body fat and near perfect muscle tone. Our five wives were fairly good looking before. Now, all five were downright foxy. When four of the five foxes (vixen) started with the Georgy business, I must have turned crimson. They could all do justice to anything they got at Victoria’s Secret.

Anyway, the guys got Manny’s greenhouse assembled and then did Bill’s. I was down to an average of 2.4R per day and helped them with Sam’s. Ours was next and Joe was tail end Charlie. Over the course of assembling the last three greenhouses, I mentioned that all five were 30’x60’ and that I had a specific layout in mind. They could do it our way or their way. Our way seemed to produce the most useable planting space and our wives had picked up the necessary lumber. They discussed it and finally agreed.

They also made other plans. Sam and Joe would take care of the solar installations and setting up the generators. Manny, Bill and I would finish connecting the water to the backyard wells and install the electrical fixtures. It was decided to have a covered du-

plex about every ten feet along the walls. The propane heater would be mounted high and wired and plumbed. Our team would do the greenhouses in the order they were erected.

The second round of activity took one week per greenhouse. It included building the tables and soil boxes. As soon as one was completed, it was powered by the dedicated generator and our wives filled the growing boxes, planted the hybrid seed they'd collected and watered it down.

Our team ended up lending a hand to Joe and Sam to complete the final installations of the solar equipment and an ATS was installed using the solar as the primary source of power and the generator as backup. It was the same setup Bill and I used for our homes except this time we only used one ATS rather than two. Since Bill and I had commercial power, solar power and generator power, the first ATS was between commercial power and standby power and the second was between the solar power and generator power. When we finished, we took a week off just to catch our breaths. Since the fallout continued to decay, my average daily exposure continued to fall. It seemed apparent that Helen hadn't explained to the other four wives about my high exposure rate. All five of us men had accumulated approximately the same accumulated dose up to the time she grounded me.

"So now what?"

"It's time for me to start another project Bill. But first, I think we should hit every grocery store in the greater Phoenix area."

"Why?"

"Trade goods. I think food would be the number one priority for most people. Number two would be a good warm shelter because, like Manny said, 'Baby it's cold outside'."

"Where would you store the goods, assuming we could find any?"

"Eastside, Westside and a Central location. Use three Costco stores or three Sam's Clubs."

"That will never work. There are only ten of us. Three people per store simply won't work."

"I realize that. I assumed we could hire some folks for security and pay them with food and a little silver or gold. We should have cleaned out the gun stores when we had the chance so we could provide our employees with military caliber firearms. Lord knows we have enough ammo."

“True. And we do know where to get more. It may not be too late on the gun stores. Maybe not all of their gun vaults have been breached. For that matter, maybe some of the precious metals dealers’ vaults are still intact. We should get a cutting torch rig set-up to use thermal lances. There isn’t much that can resist a thermal lance.”

“Do you know how to use one?”

“Not really.”

“Neither do I.”

We then spoke in a single voice, “Manny.”

The lumberyard truck was parked in front of our place with some lumber still remaining. We backed into the backyard and unloaded the lumber. Helen was in the greenhouse tending to the plants and I let her know we were going shopping.

“Where are you going?”

“It won’t be Victoria’s Secret or Dillard’s.”

“I didn’t ask you where you weren’t going. Where are you going?”

“Shopping. This trip is for precious metals. Future trips will be for firearms and ammo. Beyond that, we’re going grocery shopping.”

“You think that there’re still precious metals, guns and ammo and food that hasn’t been salvaged?”

“We won’t know until we look.”

“Take one vehicle with a radio in it so you can stay in touch.”

“Yes dear.”

The number of precious metal dealers in the Phoenix area is limited. There are more gun dealers than precious metal dealers. There are more Costco stores and Sam’s Clubs combined than gun dealers. There are a whole lot more grocery stores. We started with the lowest number and worked our way up. Joe mentioned that we should check pawn shops as possible sources of firearms and precious metals. It would prove to be a time consuming set of tasks.

We got less than expected from the precious metal dealers. We assumed that since there had been a build up before the war, they sold a lot of gold and silver. We then moved from precious metals dealers to pawn shops. Those that hadn’t been gutted

yielded about the same amount of gold and silver that we got from the metals dealers. The bonus was the firearms we found.

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Yellow Pages Ad:

We pawn firearm related items as well as jewelry. We deal in silver and gold coins, platinum and gold jewelry and diamonds. If you ever find yourself a little short, you don't have to sell your guns or gold, bring your items to us for a 90 day pawn loan.

◦

That store had a very good vault. It was obvious at the outset that there had been one or more attempts to break into the vault. The dial was so battered it wouldn't turn. Needless to say, the vault was intact and contained a gold mine worth of goods. Every kind of firearm you could imagine was in the vault from cruiser model shotguns to semi-auto and full-auto assault weapons and main battle rifles. We had to go through every storage container to find the gold and silver. I think we found it all. That was our best pawn shop score.

In general terms, using a thermal lance to open a safe is a bad idea taking longer than typically depicted and incinerating the contents of the safe. A vault is a room not a safe although it has many of the features of a safe. Manny made several swift passes around the locking mechanism, generally a dial. When enough metal was cut away, we'd take a sledge to the dial. If it didn't come off, he made another pass. It ended up taking a fair amount of time for each vault. Most times, the results were worth the time invested, but not always.

After we finished with the pawn shops, we turned to the firearms dealers. The first we hit were the class III dealers because there weren't that many and most seemed to concentrate on M-16s. We took them as a matter of preservation rather than intent to use. They could be used as trade goods to people we trusted or for use by our security force. I did snag a backup AC-556 for Helen.

The regular gun dealers had been broken into and most of their non-secure inventory was missing. About half of their vaults failed to protect their property. The other vaults, once entered, contained high value firearms: HK-91s, PTR-91s, M1As, FN FALs and imports like drillings and so forth. The only ammo stored in the vaults was the expensive Match grade ammo. We took it all and each of us selected a few pieces to add to our collections.

"We need to go to Camp Navajo. We have a reasonable amount of Match ammo but none of the regular military ball ammo."

“We can take a semi with a cargo box and get all we want. We might as well get everything else that we want and may have some use for.”

“You want more rockets, don’t you George?”

“Yes, and I want Mk 211 and M1022 and grenades of all types. We can select some explosives while we’re at it. Better haul those in a trailer behind a pickup in case of trouble. We can make the pickup tail end Charlie and follow the semi about a half mile back, just in case.”

“If you’re worried about a bullet setting the explosives off, maybe we should weld some road plate on the inside of the trailer. That will stop 7.62 but nothing will stop .50BMG.”

“Two layers just might. Let’s try that. Current .50BMG cartridges penetrate about 34mm or one and one-third inches, excluding Mk 211. Road plate is 1” thick.”

It is a good idea, as an idea. Road plate is extremely heavy. With a single plate installed on one side, the trailer bottomed out. Plan B, get a super heavy duty trailer that is rated at maybe ten tons and beef up the suspension. The problem was that the weight of the explosives was nothing compared to the weight of the protective plates. The plates came from various locations, the telephone company, the power company and various city storage yards.

Manny cut them to size and installed them, tack welding them into place. Once we completed that project, the five of us headed for Flagstaff and Camp Navajo on I-17 and then I-40 to the Camp Navajo exit. It was like a ghost town at Camp Navajo. However, all of the igloos were locked up tight and required persuasion to yield their contents. Going through some of the armories later, we selected a few machine guns, M240Bs and M2HBs. We had a total of eight of the M2HBs and eleven of the M240Bs. Each home would get a M2HB and a M240. The three stores, once set up would get one M2HB and a pair of M240s. We also brought back spare barrels and the Tech Manual of armorer instructions concerning head spacing the 7.62 barrels.

We had zero trouble going and returning. It was one of those ‘would you rather have it and not need it than not have it and need it’ situations. The trip took 3 days, ½ day up, two ½ days plus a full day there and ½ day back. We left the explosives in the trailer we hauled them in and distributed the machine guns the next day. I was chomping at the bit to start my Skousen wall project. I excused myself from the grocery store runs and got a trencher. I dug a trench 32” out from the wall of the house all the way around. It was wide enough for the steel framing and another block wall.

The hard part came next, the concrete. It was the footing for the framing and the outside wall. Fortunately, the Yellow Pages saved me. I found a place that had portable concrete mixers, preloaded with various amounts of concrete. I selected a 2 yard model and began pouring concrete directly into the trench, with no separate footing. I used a

chalk line as a guide for leveling each pour. If it was off any, the first layer of mortar could correct the problem.

Next, I located hollow concrete blocks for the outside wall facing. Then I searched the Yellow Pages for steel framing, specifically 2x6. It only took six days, with Helen's help, to erect the framing and another day to install the 3/4" plywood. Next, we built frames to extend the windows through the layer of rock to the outside. Finally, we hauled gravel to fill the walls. At this point we had to make some decisions. Should we do the outside wall first or build the additional outside shutters? How thick should the metal in the shutters be?

Although I'd have preferred to install the shutters first, we compromised. We'd fabricate the shutters using two layers of road plate topped with 1/2" plywood on both sides (got the idea from Jerry). We'd ask Manny to lend a hand with the road plate and once the shutters were fashioned and hinges added, they would be set aside until needed. That started a chain of events I hadn't anticipated. We couldn't use the flimsy steel framing to support the shutters, either. That called for very heavy 2x6 steel tubing, 1/4" or heavier.

"We're going to help you lay up that wall, install the rebar and fill the cavities with concrete. Then we'll install the shutters on the block wall and your house will be good up to .50BMG."

"What's the catch?"

"You are going to help the four of us to do the same to our four homes. You'll mostly be supervising since you know the problems you ran into when you did yours."

"First off, you need to use forms to put in the footing."

"See, you did learn a few lessons."

"Got more than a few blisters, too."

"Wear gloves."

"I was! How is it going with the grocery business?"

"Not as well as we thought. The only toilet paper we have found is the cheap stuff that's really scratchy single ply. The stores were cleaned out rather haphazardly. Combined, we can probably fill the three stores and have a backup supply equal to the original fill. We've discussed getting wheat, corn and oats. They would probably come from a feed supply that sells them and COB. That brings to mind the horses out at that riding place where we took you to learn to ride. We checked and about 1/4 of their horses survived. We need to, excuse the pun, corral them and have them ready for our own use. On top of that, we need to get out and about and find cattle, hogs, chickens, turkeys, rabbits and fish."

“Tilapia?”

“Is that what you grow in the barrels?”

“I think so.”

“Yeah, them. We located 3 reefer trailers, 53’ jobs, so we can have one per store. We think we’ll only sell frozen meat to keep it simple. Have to find a couple of meat cutters and a butcher for each store.”

“What’s the difference?”

“In this context, the butcher kills the animals, skins them and breaks them down into primal cuts. The meat cutters turn the primal cuts into retail cuts.”

“You’re going to need three more reefers. Meat isn’t frozen until it is in retail cuts. Before that, it hangs in a refrigerated space and ages. When the butcher breaks out the primal cuts he has to cure the bacon and hams. They generally don’t require being frozen.”

“Whatever. We have a line on some guys for security at the three stores. We agreed to pay them in food and precious metals to move what we found to the three stores and the remainder to a central warehouse.”

“Someone going to supervise them?”

“Our wives. We figure that once your house is done, it will be impenetrable and won’t require a 24/7 guard. Are you sure you’re not from California?”

“Why?”

“Your entire lot is surrounded by 6’ high concrete block walls or very heavy gates. Plus, you have those 6” posts you put behind the gates to stop anything except a dozer from getting through the gates.”

“I’m from Phoenix. The stuff you’re talking about just arose from an abundance of caution.”

“Tomorrow, 8 am.”

“Do you have time for a drink?”

“Jack Black? You still have some left?”

“Single Barrel and I may just have cornered the market on Single Barrel, Gentleman Jack and Jack Black.”

“Helen drinks tequila.”

“Need a couple of cases of Cuervo 1800?”

“How much booze do you have?”

“Enough to fill two garage stalls.”

“You an alcoholic?”

“That’s enough for ten lifetimes for us.”

“Are you still using Cuervo mix?”

“No. I finally figured out how to make a margarita. The IBA standard is 7:4:3, that is, 50% tequila, 29% Triple Sec, 21% fresh lime or lemon juice. I sometimes add a little simple syrup if it’s too tart. I use Cuervo 1800, Grand Marnier and fresh lime juice.”

“What would you do if you didn’t have a lime tree?”

“Find one and pick it clean.”

“Bars use ice machines to produce those small cubes for cocktails. What do you do, break up your ice cubes?”

“I suppose I could, in a pinch. No, I just use the small cubes from my ice machine. I bought it from a bar, when the machine went belly up, for \$50. The parts to repair it only cost me about \$60. I added a descaler in front of the inlet and get perfect ice cubes. The bar didn’t use a descaler. I cleaned out the lines and it was good to go. The descaler is what cost me the sixty bucks.”

“You’re a real gadget freak aren’t you?”

“Never denied it. Same thing with the bread slicer.”

“I’ll take a couple of fingers of Single Barrel, neat.”

“I think I’ll do the same. It just isn’t right to put Squirt in Single Barrel. Jack Black and Gentleman Jack are another story.”

“If you need a hand, I’d be happy to take a case of Single Barrel off your hands. You know, to free up space in one of your garage stalls.”

o

Note: The stuff runs \$50 a bottle and a case of Single Barrel is around \$600. They will sell you the whole barrel, bottled, if you want to go to Tennessee and pick it out. There are 250 750ml bottles to the barrel. That's 49.5 gallons of pure pleasure. Before he stopped drinking, TOM drank Jack Black. He also liked Bombay Sapphire Gin, Jose Cuervo 1800, Chivas Regal, and Absolute Vodka. He liked his Martini's 'very dry', e.g., gin on the rocks. Manhattans could use the regular recipe. His preferred Margarita was made with Cuervo 1800, Grand Marnier and lime juice. Scotch was always served on the rocks and Vodka was mainly to get a buzz without as bad a hangover. Last I heard, he hasn't had a drink since 1-1-99, so he has 12 years and has never tasted Single Barrel.

o

"Yeah, right. What the hell, that's probably the only way you'll get any. Tomorrow, 8 am?"

"On the dot."

"See ya."

"Don't forget the worms..."

He didn't hear me. I knew where to get nightcrawlers and proceeded to do so. They have to be kept cool and die if the temperature is above 65°F. My first stop was a farm store where I picked up ten regular water troughs for the fish and ten shallow water troughs for the worms. We still had plenty of potting soil to fill the worm beds. My second stop was at a bait shop where I collected all of the Canadian nightcrawlers. It didn't look like I had enough so I looked up more bait shops in the Yellow Pages and went to four more. Call me if you need worms.

I put two of the tanks in our greenhouse below a section of table and put the worm bed on top of the table. Then, I checked the Yellow Pages again and went out and found ten New Age Pet Eco-Concepts Huntington Townhouse Rabbit Hutches. On the way back, I swung by the farm store and picked up some Purina Rabbit Chow. They had several different kinds so I just took it all. I assumed we could split it up and mix the Chow together, one 50# bag of each 'flavor'. Hey, what do I know? I was a former Ranger who built Apache helicopters until I quit my job.

o

"There you go."

"What?"

"Two rabbit hutches apiece, two filled worm beds apiece and two fish tanks apiece. You guys are going to have to find the rabbits and fish; I got the worms."

“Where did you put yours?”

“I cleaned off a section on one of the outside tables in our greenhouse. The tank went underneath and the worm bed on top. I put together a frame out of the leftover 4x4s to support the hutches.”

“Let’s get this show on the road.”

It went. I won’t attempt to characterize the activity as slow or fast; I just say we finally got finished. We hauled the leftover building materials to Bill and Susan’s and did the same thing. It went faster this time. According to the reports we were getting from our wives, we’d finish up about the time our security people had everything moved. Therein lay a problem. We had to get the horses to our homes and provide them with feed, water and shelter. We had to find beef, pork, chickens, turkeys and fish.

Add to that the Wheat, Corn and Oats and the COB (corn, oats & barley) horse feed mix. While we were assembling the Skousen walls, we discussed all the things we still need to accomplish before we got more snow. Oh, I didn’t mention that it had started to snow around the time we started on Bill’s walls, did I? You couldn’t see the lights on in the greenhouses during the daytime so the sky was obviously ash filled. Manny, Sam and Joe lived about one mile apart with closest being about two miles from Bill’s and three miles from us. You shouldn’t really pour concrete when the temperatures are as low as they fell, but we added an accelerant to the concrete and put them in plastic tents fed from a kerosene heater. We did all four of the footings before we returned to Bill’s to start on their walls.

Joe, Sam, Bill and I started installing the framing and added the plywood sheath. We next added the window extensions and finally began laying the block. At our house, we all learned a lesson. In order to maintain a slope between the house and the outside wall, we made the outside wall two blocks short of the inside wall. The area between the inner and outer walls was covered with that 1” road plate and tarred and shingled. Yeah, I know, you can’t nail into 1” road plate. We didn’t try. We waited until the tar was really tacky and slapped the shingles on. They were only for appearance.

Unfortunately, my shingles slid and as we finished up Bill and Susan’s we topped the road plate with plywood and stapled the shingles in place. Joe was two miles from Bill and he was next. It didn’t go any faster than it had at Bills, but Baby, it was cold outside. We were collecting the kerosene heaters aka hog house heaters and moving them with us to keep from freezing. We had to move the snow off the footings at Joe’s before we could start construction.

“Maybe we should stop with Joe’s house.”

“Why?”

“We’re freezing our butts off and I’m not sure the mortar will set in the outside wall.”

“But, I want my house done and I’m the last one in line,” Sam said.

“Look guys, 90% of the protection comes from the gravel so all we have to do is put in the steel framing, add the plywood and fill the space with gravel. We can do the remaining work when it warms up. Something else you should be thinking about is getting that livestock rounded up before it all starves or freezes to death.”

*Keep rollin', rollin', rollin',
Though the streams are swollen,
Keep them dogies rollin', rawhide.
Through rain and wind and weather,
Hell bent for leather,
Wishin' my gal was by my side.
All the things I'm missin',
Good vittles, love, and kissin',
Are waiting at the end of my ride.*

Move 'em out, head 'em up,
Head 'em up, move 'em on.
Move 'em out, head 'em up: Rawhide.
Cut 'em out, ride 'em in,
Ride 'em in, cut 'em out,
Cut 'em out, ride 'em in: Rawhide!
Hah! Hah!

“Don’t give up your day job.”

“I know that one, *Top Gun*, right?”

“What a waste.”

“Huh?”

“She claims she’s gay.”

“Who, Charlie?”

“Yeah, Charlie.”

“I thought she was Amish.”

“Only in *Witness*.”

“Just a cotton picking minute. George, you said that 90% of the protection comes from the 32” of gravel. I can accept that...but what about the windows? We can't install the shutters unless we construct the block walls and install the rebar and fill the cavities. Since the three of us know how to do this, let us continue and the two of you go find the livestock, feed, hay and straw bedding. Find an equipment trailer and tow a forklift and add a pallet jack. Another thing we'll need to do is erect some kind of pole barns to shelter the livestock. The lot next to mine is empty at the moment because the rioters burned down the house and a demolition company cleaned up the lot and took out the slab.”

“Any objections? No? Ok Sam, we'll do it your way. How are we paying those guards, exactly?”

“Beans, rice, corn meal and flour with some canned meats, fruits and vegetables. They groused about the quantity of food; I pointed out that it was about equal to what we were eating. The silver coins took out the sting. We've been holding off the bullion gold and paying them in junk silver. A thousand dollar face value of circulated coins contains 715 ounces at 30 an ounce. A half dollar is worth about 10.72, a quarter 5.36 and a dime 2.15. We're in good shape there due to our salvaging efforts.”

“What about those people who don't have gold or silver?”

“Everyone has to have something of value that they can trade for food, even if it's only manual labor. We'd better value manual labor at the federal minimum wage to be fair about it.”

“So, 35 cents face value of 90% silver?”

“Close enough. It's actually a bit higher than the federal level of \$7.25 since 35 cents face is \$7.51. It does give them the opportunity to acquire things we don't have for sale. Uncirculated 'junk silver' contains 723 ounces per thousand of face value. Its value is a bit higher. I don't know anyone with uncirculated 'junk silver'.”

“Helen and I have a bit.”

“How much is a bit?”

“Three thousand dollars face. Mom and Dad invested in it back in 1964 and bought a thousand dollars face each of uncirculated dimes, quarters and halves. It's put up, but at 30 an ounce the halves are worth 10.85, the quarters 5.42 and the dimes 2.17. We also have some circulated silver that really is 'junk silver' and there's no real reason to bring out the good stuff since most people wouldn't know the difference.”

“We either going to be considered to be their saviors or opportunists. Fair enough. From now on all expeditions off the properties will be in full battle rattle. That includes body

armor and LBE. HK-417s for the men and HK-416s for our wives with shotguns and pistols for backup.”

“That’s it, I guess. Bill and I will take off early tomorrow, around 7 am. We’ll start with the grain and then get the horses. After that, we’ll just take what we can find that’s abandoned. We can gill net the fish from the canals around Phoenix and check out where they keep their breeding stock of Tilapia. The thing is I’m not so sure about the Tilapia. They were maintained in the canals to eat the vegetation. But, Tilapiines are also among the easiest and most profitable fish to farm. This is due to their omnivorous diet, mode of reproduction (the fry do not pass through a planktonic phase), tolerance of high stocking density, and rapid growth.”

“I see. That’s why you’re growing them in your greenhouse.”

“By the way, all three of us setup our operation the same as you did yours. What did you do Bill?”

“Nothing beyond the water tanks and the worm beds. I’m waiting until we get rabbits to install the hutches. The rabbit droppings feed the worms and the worms feed the fish, or so I’m told. The thing is, a worm isn’t vegetation and I’m a bit confused about the whole scenario.”

“George, I’ll be at your house around 7 am. We’re going to need to line up the pallet jack and forklift before we go looking. Want to start with the horses?”

“We’d better start with the feed. It wouldn’t hurt to pick up some poles, trusses and sheet metal for the pole barns either. We need shelter and food before we can haul the livestock. If we keep it simple and can find some king post trusses with a 1:1 pitch it won’t take much to slap together the pole barns. We can lay plywood or OSB on the chord members to hold the hay and straw. Probably need some type of small metal grain silo or two. Store COB in one and some kind of cattle/hog feed in the other. Maybe a mixture of corn and soybean meal or whatever we can find.”

“Hold on there hoss. You’re saying we’re going to have to get the structures before the animals?”

“Not necessarily. If we find the animals, we can move them to a farm or ranch with a good supply of feed. However, and it’s a big however, we can’t move them to our places until we can feed, shelter and water them. I’ve seen some of those old Butler grain bins that the government used to store surplus commodities in, somewhere. I just have to think about where I saw them and hope they’re still there when I do remember.”

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Butler sold its grain bin business in 1997. The same grain bins they developed for the US Government back in 1937 are still manufactured by CBC, Inc. Except for the name

plate, they're Butler grain bins. Butler Manufacturing Company introduced its first galvanized steel grain bin in 1907. By 1938 research had proven the superiority of these bins over wooden ones, and the next year the US Department of Agriculture announced its intention to receive bids on delivering 30,666 steel bins needed to store excess grain from a bumper crop. This order was one and a half times more bins than had been produced the previous year by the entire industry. Guaranteed bids had to be submitted within 30 days and delivered within just 60 days of receiving an order. Butler took on the challenge and, against phenomenal odds, refurbished an abandoned plant in Galesburg, Illinois, supplied it with machinery, staffed it, and mass-produced 14,500 steel bins in 59 days, plus another 6,000 bins in just 15 days.

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"You know we might get lucky and find a full bin."

"If we do, we can move an empty one here and transport the grain from the full bin to the empty bin. Then, we locate a second full bin and transfer the contents to the now emptied bin after we move it."

"Where are we going to put them?"

"I was planning on tearing down the house on each side and erect the pole barn on one lot and the two grain bins on the other. The houses adjoining ours on each side are empty."

"I'm going to call the Pep Boys and tell them to go ahead and finish up their walls. While I'm at it I'll, let them know that each will need two empty lots for the pole barn and grain bins."

"That will be a good start."

"There's more?"

"Oh yeah, block walls enclosing all five of the combined properties. Each lot will need the gates like I have in my wall."

"You're serious, aren't you?"

"Absolutely. Once people figure out how much we've accumulated they'll turn out in droves demanding handouts. Since all of them have had the same opportunity to accumulate what we have, I'm disinclined to give out handouts. If they're willing to work, we'll find something for them to do at one of the three stores; or in select cases taking care of the livestock. Helen and I put together some small humanitarian aid packages, mostly for women and children. We have some for men who may be unable to work. All of them are one time deals. Make your call and we'll take off."

o

Bill and I moved COB to the stable and got the horses fed and watered. We then searched for livestock. We found far more dead than alive, but find them we did. Our best score was a herd of Black Angus grazing in a pasture. We moved them a few at a time to the stable. There were several calves, their mothers and two bulls. They were about as much as we wanted for the moment. We had to use horses from the stable to move the cattle, especially the two bulls. I'm sure glad I learned to ride.

There was an abundance of feed at the stable and we put the remaining cattle in the barn with feed and water. Bill and I discussed the situation and agreed to ask Susan and Helen to keep those cattle and horses fed and watered. We would let them out weekly and muck the barn. Swine were harder to find. We ran across a small herd of Yorkshires. We took the entire herd, moved them to the stable and bedded them down. One ranch further on had another breed of pigs, Hampshire's. Again, we moved the entire herd.

We stopped searching briefly and went to a nearby farm store looking for portable chicken coops. We found the coops all right, and a large number of rabbits. We used the coops to move the rabbits back to our homes with all the rabbit feed we could carry to add to that we already had.

"Aren't they cute?"

"Don't get too attached, you might end up eating a friend."

"The cattle and horses seemed happy to see us. What kind of pigs were those?"

"Yorkshires. Today we added Hampshire's. We're not going to have room for the livestock we found so we're only going to move some of the horses from the stable and keep the other livestock there. When we find chickens, we'll bring them directly home in temporary coops."

"Hold your horses, George. Where are we going to put the chickens? Where are we going to put the horses? When are you going to get the fish to finish off that little project?"

"The fish we can do anytime, we just need to string a net across one of the canals."

"Okay, do that tomorrow, we have plenty of nightcrawlers to feed the fish and with the rabbits, the number of worms should increase rapidly. Now, where are we going to put the chickens?"

"Bill and I discussed, briefly, demolishing the houses on either side of us. We'd use one lot for a pole barn and the other for grain bins. The chicken coops could go with the pole barn."

“You said bins, plural. Why do you need more than one? Won’t chickens eat the same food as horses?”

“Jimmy crack corn and I don’t care? You just may be right. I think we’d have to process the COB slightly but it should work.”

“So can you fit it all on one lot? Knowing you, the new lot will have to be enclosed in a block wall, right?”

“That was the plan.”

“That means you’ll have to erect a street side wall and one on their far property line. And, you’ll have to cut a space for a gate in our existing wall. How about you build the chicken coop in our back corner and get a prefab building from a lumberyard for the hen house?”

“Good ideas. Have you been in touch with the others? How’s that work coming along?”

“Joe’s is finished up and Manny’s will be by the middle of next week. They’ll start on Sam’s and it will be done by the end of the following week.”

“Have you been checking on the guards at the stores?”

“Everything is moved and the stores and warehouse are locked up tight with guards posted 24/7. Marilyn, Cassandra and Julia have located meat cutters and butchers. Additional 53’ reefers have been moved to each store. Each store has a large diesel generator and a double tanker of stabilized diesel fuel. Each has been equipped with multiple large propane heaters and industrial sized propane tanks located, installed and filled. The five of us took it upon ourselves give each of the guards some meat from our freezers in addition to their food and silver wages. They’ve really worked hard.”

“Who is going to run the stores? At the moment, the five of us are tied up locating livestock and completing the construction projects.”

“The guards said they’ve had inquiries from several people pertaining to when the stores will open. Additionally, some former employees have inquired about possibly getting a job. Several were former checkers, bakers and a few that stocked shelves.”

“The five of you will have to do the screening and hiring. You’ll also need to decide on compensation.”

“Seems to me that everyone should earn the same wage. We won’t hire more than one person from a family.”

The next day, we put stock tanks half filled with water in the back of both pickups and located a net. By 1PM, we had all the fish our tanks could hold. Frankly, I’m surprised

the fish had survived the cold. After lunch, we located five nearly identical prebuilt buildings appropriate for hen houses. We also located T posts and chicken wire. Manny told us that when we found the chickens, he'd show us how to clip the wings to keep them from flying. They were well along on Manny's Skousen wall. The shutters had been pre-fabricated and would go up as soon as the wall was finished, on either Tuesday or Wednesday next week.

I had filled Bill in on the things Helen and I had discussed and we informed the other three men. It seemed they already knew most of what we told them from the 'wives network'. It was agreed to only use one additional lot at each location with a smaller pole barn for up to four head of horses. For the others, one grain bin would go in on the same lot holding COB. The pole buildings would have a single entrance and the side would be one side of the chicken yard and the backstop for the hen house. There wouldn't be much spare room on the lot and it would be totally enclosed with block walls with a gate to the primary lot.

"As soon as our wives have hired staffs, we should open the three stores. That means you're going to have to haul hogs and cattle to the stores so the butchers can do their thing. You probably should plan on four head of cattle per store and a half dozen hogs."

"We can do that Manny. Are you three going to continue the construction until we're all done? We're going to need more cattle for sure and probably more pigs. We haven't seen any chickens yet or turkeys."

"Yeah, you guys keep looking for food for us and food for the livestock. Once we finish up at Sam's, he will be set to go with the pole barn and grain bin if you can find one."

"I think I remember where I saw them, so we'll go look. They were sort of small and we might be able to move them intact on a truck."

o

We did find the grain bins and there were six in the location. Four were empty and the other two held COB. We looked around the ranch but didn't find any live horses. We looked the grain bins over carefully and they were sitting on concrete slabs, but unattached.

"You know, what we need is a tilt bed truck with a winch. Figure some way to tilt the bin over and put a skid under it on each side and then tie the skids together. After that, we could tilt the truck bed and pull the skid with bin onto the truck bed."

"Won't work, they are much wider than a truck."

"So, we use four skids instead of two."

"You think that will work?"

“We can always go to Plan B.”

“What’s Plan B?”

“I’m working on it.”

We returned to Phoenix, located a tilt bed truck at a farm equipment retailer and picked up a bunch of 4x6s at a lumberyard. Returning, we lay the timbers where we wanted them and used the winch and a 4x6 to tilt the grain bin, whereupon Bill inserted the first inner and outer skids on the lifted side. It took very little tilting to insert the other skids. We then began installing the cross braces, two on front and two on back bracing the braces with 2x12s to prevent twisting.

“You ready?”

“Yeah. Go ahead and move the truck and then tilt the bed.”

“I’ll do that, George, and you hook up the log chain to the front braces.”

We hauled the grain bin to Manny’s and they helped us unload it on the vacant lot.

“Are they all the same size?”

“Yep.”

“Full or empty?”

“Four empty and two full. I thought we’d move five for us and the extra to the stable.”

“How are you going to move the grain?”

“Probably find an auger and auger it into a grain truck.”

“You should probably wait on the grain bins until we’ve cleared the lots. Better hang on to that truck too.”

“Ok. Get some crowbars and let’s dismantle the skids.”

By the time we’d finished, the bin was sitting on the ground about a foot and a half from the sidewalk and a foot and a half in from the property line. The pole barn would go between the grain bin and back block wall. We took the truck home and Helen hauled us back to the implement dealer’s place to pick up our pickups and we followed her home. We had time so Bill and I drove T posts and strung the chicken wire in our back corner. We had a drink and Bill and Susan went home.

“What’s cookin’, good lookin’?”

“Fresh chili and homemade French bread.”

“How long before it’s ready?”

“Go wash up and sit down to eat.”

“Can you hold it so I can get a shower?”

“I can, but the bread is still warm. It’s up to you.”

“I’ll be right back.”

The Trials of George Thomas – Twelve

Seven months later – Recovery:

It took us the last seven months to complete the tasks we needed to complete. Once staffs were hired for the three stores, livestock was brought in to be butchered, aged, cut down to primal cuts and cut into retail cuts. Some of the Black Angus cows provided milk, but not like regular milk cows would have. Once we had the chickens, both hens and roosters, we began saving the eggs and putting them into incubators. Maybe 75-80% were fertile and hatched. We all expanded our chicken pens and divided the broody hens and roosters from the new pullets and young roosters. They eventually became our source of chicken for the stores.

The tilapia did well but the demand far exceeded the number we were producing so we hired two guys to net them from the canals and take them directly to the stores where the butchers were tasked with filleting them and getting them in the freezers. We had to play musical chairs with equipment to ensure that each store had sufficient retail freezer space. The fish were dying off due to the cold.

The stable remained our prime location for the cattle, hogs and extra horses. We did begin selling horses when we were asked if we had horses for sale. We made a trip to California and bought turkeys to round out our poultry offerings. As things began to take on a sense of normalcy, we imported additional agricultural commodities of all kinds.

Unlike the other four families in our group, Helen and I went ahead and cleared both adjoining lots and put the fifth and sixth grain bins on the second lot. This let us build a pole barn large enough to hold 8 horses, all geldings. Geldings, we thought, had several advantages. First, they were less difficult to deal with than stallions; second, they didn't need time off when carrying a foal; and third, they were better tempered than either the stallions or mares. It also seemed they had greater endurance. Arizona is horse country due to the number of ranches and we had no problem locating a farrier and keeping him busy.

Bill and I continued to look for and find grains of all kinds that the stores could turn into retail products. Corn was ground into corn meal, wheat into flour, oats rolled for oatmeal and cracked barley sold in bulk. The food imports included honey, onion, garlic and tomatoes plus nuts and fruit from the big valley. Premixed COB was acquired to feed the large herd of horses. Some ranchers had begun to produce hay again and we got a few to plant wheat and/or oats and others to grow the barley.

We located a grain elevator, complete with staff, to process and store our grains. They put us on where to look for the supplements they added to some of their mixtures. The area around Phoenix, while not prospering was much better off once they had source of food available and some of the normal store bought foods, like sliced bread. Each store had a relatively new bread slicer and could cut up to two pound loaves in addition to producing their ever present muffins of all types.

Initially people would come in and look and drool looking over our selections, buying little. When it was explained that we would accept labor in payment for the foods, business picked up. We were offering 35¢/hour face value in junk silver as our base labor rate and a little more for the few skilled workers we needed.

Finally the day we were dreading came to pass, the ANG showed up. After they got over their amazement at the conditions in the greater Phoenix area, they dropped the other shoe. The explanation they offered was that there were others in Arizona with a greater need. The ten of us asked to meet with the man in charge, a Lieutenant Colonel. He declined to meet with us. That night, we moved three additional M2HB and M240 machine guns to the three stores ensconced in sand bagged fighting positions on the roof tops. We added defensive hand grenades and rockets. They weren't getting the goods that we'd spent time and money on collecting nor the other things we produced like the meat products and fish.

They had a M2HB...we had M2HBs. They had an Mk-19 and we had AG-C/EGLMs. They had M72 rockets, but we had more. They had M-16s and most of us had M1As and other 7.62x52mm caliber rifles plus 5 Tac-50s. The main thing we had was right on our side. We had gone afield gathering, but never all that far from Phoenix. No more than 40 miles in any direction.

When they showed up the next day to haul the contents from one our stores, our rapid reaction force showed up slightly after. The ten of us, all sniper grade shooters, made up the reaction force. We called the head guard and told him to give them an ultimatum, "Leave or Die!"

Their response was to swing the heavy weapons towards the store and the riflemen lined up pointing their weapons at the two guards by the entrance. We fired two shots, eliminating the heavy weapons gunners and allowing our guards to slip into the store. They were told a second time, "Leave or Die!" Their response was to replace the heavy weapons gunners. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me. We responded with rockets, 40mm grenades and our own M2HBs. There would be no fool me thrice. We did manage to recover the M2HB and the Mk-19 and some of the ammo.

Another trip was in order to gather up belted 40mm grenades. Sam and Joe went after them while we collected their dog tags and buried the bodies. The remaining troops had bugged out. We told Joe and Sam to keep a lookout for the troops that had bugged out. It was a street fight, pure and simple, and there are no rules in a street fight. We had agreed in the beginning that we would give no quarter. One final point, we could easily see they were wearing Interceptor so we limited our fire to using the .50 caliber rifles and machine guns. The best aiming point for Mk 211 is the body armor plate.

Joe and Sam said they'd seen neither hide nor hair of the guardsmen up at Camp Navajo. Never the less, they were back within two weeks with an enhanced company consisting of four infantry and two heavy weapons platoons. Our guys did locate two

additional Mk-19s but none of the M40 106mm recoilless rifles. The M40s had been replaced with TOW missiles after Vietnam and most of the remaining stock sold to foreign countries. Heavy weapons platoon is a term which refers to an infantry platoon equipped with machine guns, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades, flamethrowers, grenade-launchers, anti-tank weapons, and/or other portable heavy weapons.

This Company had, in addition to a Captain as Company Commander, a full Colonel who was the Brigade Commander.

“Who is in charge here?”

“No one. Our five families control the three grocery stores and keep them provisioned.”

“Who was responsible for the attack on the men in my command?”

“That would be our five families and our security force. The destroyed HMMWVs were dragged to a parking lot and stripped. The troops were buried in a cemetery with one of their dog tags nailed to the wooden cross. Here are the second dog tags. We used coffins but lacked the means to embalm the bodies.”

“What gives you the authority to kill my men?”

“Both the 4th and 5th Amendments to the Constitution. *The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized. And, No person shall be held to answer for a capital, or otherwise infamous crime, unless on a presentment or indictment of a Grand Jury, except in cases arising in the land or naval forces, or in the Militia, when in actual service in time of War or public danger; nor shall any person be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb; nor shall be compelled in any criminal case to be a witness against himself, nor be deprived of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation.’*”

“That still doesn’t permit you to kill them.”

“We held our fire until they aimed their Ma Deuce and Mk-19 at us. At that point, we only took out the two gunners and gave them a second chance to back off and they replaced the gunners to continue their attack. At that point we opened fire. We’re well equipped with fifty caliber weapons.”

“Probably all marked Property of the US Government.”

“The machine guns obviously are. The rifles are all locally produced and individually owned.”

“Who makes them here?”

“McMillan. They’re all Tac-50s. Just because the machine guns are marked Property of the US Government doesn’t mean they are. There’re actually many in civilian hands and all registered with the ATF on the National Firearms Registry.”

“You must be aware that a state of Martial Law exists.”

“We weren’t notified if it does. Honestly we could really care less. It’s taken you two years to get to the largest city in Arizona. We haven’t seen any food or medical supplies. A fair number of the locals in the winter months are snowbirds. They’re mostly seniors who required prescription drugs to survive. I think you’ll find that they are mostly dead. We busted our butts for two years establishing this food supply set up and providing jobs to many of the residents; either as store employees and working at one of our operations. We pay above minimum wage in food and silver.”

“You’re quite proud of yourself?”

“You damned right and with good reason. Now, are you here to help or here to try and take what we have?”

“Try?”

“Yeah, try. You’ll never get it done Colonel. In fact, at the moment you’re covered by two Ma Deuces and five snipers with Tac-50s. You should be more concerned about leaving alive than threatening to taking our supplies.”

“Ex-military?”

“Second Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment.”

“More than just you?”

“A little of everything. We can turn out a force larger than yours in under ten minutes.”

“No way!”

“I held my radio to my mouth and said, *Code Red at the Central Grocery*. Start your stop watch Colonel.”

At home Helen picked up the Code Red and the location. She got on CB Channel nine and repeated the message. She quickly slipped into full battle rattle and headed over to pick up Susan who was waiting when Helen arrived. In normal times, the central location was a fifteen minute drive in very light traffic. These weren’t normal times and there was no traffic. They made it in nine minutes from my call.

While not everyone had a radio, enough did that I could reach them all with my radio. At ten minutes, the Colonel said, "Times up, I win."

I put my radio to my mouth and said, *Please show yourselves.*

The turnout was better than I expected. We had them outnumber by almost 2 to 1.

"What do you call yourselves, the Minutemen?"

"That wouldn't be politically correct Colonel. The group includes many females. We mostly call ourselves friends."

"I see. What would you need in term of outside supplies?"

"We could use medicines, a Doctor or two, a Dentist, an Optometrist or Ophthalmologist, nurses and aides where appropriate. For food, mostly spices, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, salt, coffee, tea, and cocoa. Other things like toilet paper and feminine hygiene supplies. Basic work clothing and cold weather clothing. We could use gasoline, kerosene, diesel fuel and propane as soon as it's available. We have most of the rest covered."

"Maybe one doctor, one dentist and an Optometrist. Some food, basic supplies and clothing. Not much fuel available at the moment. None of the refineries were hit, but that ash really gummed up the works. On top of that, they're haven't been any oil imports since the war."

"We understand that, Colonel. I said as soon as it's available. The population of the greater Phoenix area is a pale representation of what it once was. It's approximately 0.0004 of the last census. That's 0.04% Colonel if you're not up on your math skills. Had someone shown up within a reasonable time, it would have been more like 4% or even higher. It's not so much that we got much radiation from Los Angeles as the combination of the long fallout decay period coupled with the volcanic ash."

"What's the surviving population?"

"Between 6 and 700. I can guarantee you one thing; the survivors are a hardy bunch."

"You're kidding, right? Six and seven hundred?"

"I'm as serious as a heart attack Colonel. I'm not really in charge as I said before. Our group of five families come as close to authority figures as exist here and all we do is run and supply the grocery stores. Rather strange grocery stores, too. You can get most of the usual items in the grocery section, guns and ammo in another section and salvaged clothing in another. You know the Phoenix weather I assume? Between 110 and 120 during the summer months some years. Not a lot of cold weather gear except in ski

shops and sporting goods stores. Carhartt is either in Dearborn or central Mexico. We mostly have Columbia Sportswear from several locations plus Filson from one store.”

“We’ll see what we can do, but no promises.”

“Don’t run into too many honest military these days.”

“What makes you think I’m being honest?”

“No promises. Ok, are we done here? If not, let the fight begin.”

“No, we’re done. Thank you, uh, you didn’t tell me your name.”

“George Thomas.”

“Thank you mister Thomas. Captain, head ‘em up, move ‘em out south towards Tucson.”

Keep rollin', rollin', rollin'

[Nowhere in the song does it say head ‘em up, move ‘em out. It does say move 'em out, head 'em up and also says head 'em up, move 'em on. You may want to lookup Eric Fleming on Wiki.]

We eventually got the doctor, dentist and an Ophthalmologist. Military corpsmen and women were released from active duty to provide various communities with nursing services. Much of Arizona was a vast wasteland. City after city simply had no survivors. Some small towns, however did relatively well, like Show Low. Show Low had a population of around 12,000 before the war. The current population was around 2,000 and most were Apache. While the Apache only constituted about 3½% of the population before, that changed and they now accounted for 90% of the population.

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Remember our project with Skousen walls? Spent a lot of time on that project and used not only time but materials. Was it a case of gifted foresight or a huge waste of time and resources? Helen thinks I should make you guess. I can’t figure out how to do that in this instance. Just when we were convinced it had been a waste of time and resources, those eyes that the hills had came out of the hills. They watched and waited and waited and watched some more. When they finally came to town, they had eight specific locations in mind.

I guess, looking back, we should have totally cleaned out Camp Navajo of anything we could use and destroyed the rest. Just because our little MAG, if that’s what you think we are, didn’t like direct gas impingement systems didn’t mean that others felt the same

way. The US government swore by the rifles that they'd used since the mid-sixties. Every branch of service use the 5.56 M-16s and 9mm M-9s.

By now you must know that we favored the 7.62 caliber rifles and .45acp caliber handguns. Our wives had the same plus 5.56 and 9mm. The increased recoil was directly related to the increased energy leaving the barrel. Unless your hand was too small for a P-14, it was probably the best choice. Otherwise there was nothing wrong with the M1911A1. Colt Commanders were smaller still. The 50BMG cartridge had participated in WW I and every conflict since. Strangely, it was nothing more than a scaled up .30-06 cartridge but it did the job intended, and more. One of the measures of armor effectiveness was whether or not it could be penetrated by a .50BMG AP round.

We had made one change to the Skousen walls that Jerry never mentioned. We could close the outside shutters from the inside using metal rods to push the shutter past perpendicular and pull a rope to finish closing them. It took a right smart shove to get them moving, but once moving the momentum carried them past perpendicular and a tug on the rope pulled them closed. The rope could be tied off to keep them closed.

One of the problems we realized early on was that very little sound came into the houses, especially when the aluminum shutters were in place. But those aluminum shutters weren't bulletproof. Two inches (50.8mm) of road plate should stop a .50BMG AP round and an Mk211MP round would penetrate 11mm of armor plate. How does that compare to 2" of road plate? Your guess is as good as mine and time will tell, perhaps.

Our home had a limited number of windows. There was one on either side of the main door in the living room, one in each of the two bedrooms and one over the kitchen sink. The window in the third bedroom, now our study, had been pulled years earlier and the holes closed. Both the front and rear doors had their own road plate shutter with the same closing arrangement as the window shutters. All five homes were equipped the same. As a rule, we kept the shutters over the doors open as well as the window over the sink and the window to the left of the front door (looking from the inside out). The aluminum shutters and road plate shutters for the bedrooms we kept closed as was the window to the right of the living room door.

Around oh dark thirty (3 am) our home came under fire. I began closing shutters as fast as I could on the front side of the house (one door and one window). I moved to the kitchen and closed the rear door shutter followed by the sink window shutter. A flick of a switch brought the remaining aluminum shutters down. Meanwhile, Helen was on the radio putting out a Code Red call and giving our location. The problem was that the attackers had attacked eight locations, our five homes and the three stores.

"Helen, assign squads to specific locations. Two squads to each location."

Our squads weren't military squads, they were groups of people in the same neighborhoods and we had a lot of squads, over twenty. She did the math and assigned two squads to each store and three to each home. We moved to the basement, barred the

door and entered the shelter with that thick steel and concrete door protecting us. I fired up the radios and listened to the various exchanges. We had not made provisions for firing ports and I'm not so sure that was a bad decision. A firing port, while allowing you to fire out, also allows opponent to fire in. It also creates a weak point in your overall defenses, thereby becoming a tradeoff.

The walls were built after the war, something that most people would have laughed at. Like TOM says, the Opry ain't over until the fat lady sings. Would we do more? Probably not, we were about as secure as we could reasonably be. We are talking 32" of $\frac{3}{4}$ " gravel between two 8" block walls with all openings protected by 2" of road plate. It just occurred to me, how much RHA equals 2" of road plate? Do we need to add a second set of shutters also 2" thick? Hmm... Nope, can't do it without a major rebuild. We'd have to replace the plywood shells with concrete block walls.

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They screwed up. They were using M-16s, which even under the best circumstances gum up due to lack of lubrication and an accumulation of carbon firing residues. Maybe you could actually get 600 rounds from an M-16 if it was totally clean at the outset and you kept it lubed with CLP or motor oil like Grand likes. Somehow I rather doubt these people had read much on Frugal's. They did manage to punch some holes in the outside layer of concrete block, nothing is impossible. It took them more time than they thought it would and they ended up receiving fire from behind them.

There are only so many certainties in life. You're born. You live. You die. You most likely pay taxes whether you want to or not. That applies to everyone, red, yellow, black or white, skinny or fat, short or tall, old or young, atheist, Christian, Jew, Buddhist, Hindu or Muslim.

Our people were equipped with Main Battle Rifles; you know the heavy 7.62x51mm rifles of multiple brands: M14s and their various clones, FN FALs, various HK firearms and so forth which all had one thing in common. They used some kind of piston and stayed clean for a very, very long time. Most were semi auto and that feature encouraged the user to select and carefully place their shots rather than spraying and praying.

Spray and pray is a derisive term for firing an automatic firearm towards an enemy in long bursts, without aiming or just in the general direction of the opponent. This may be done especially by the poorly trained. It differs from suppressive fire as the shooting is sloppily directed. This term does not apply to appropriately focused fully automatic fire, true suppressive fire, as possible for a well-trained user. It was due to the tendency of soldiers to spray and pray during the Vietnam War that the US replaced the automatic-fire setting that was on the original M16 with three-round burst fire for the M16A2 and M16A4/M4 carbine.

The M14 and many other 7.62x51mm rifles which were initially designed with full auto available proved to be less than satisfactory. The US eliminated the selector and other

components from the M14 due to its tendency to 'shoot the moon'. Some say the only really successful rifle of that caliber that was controllable was the Beretta BM-59 with its tri-compensator. I've heard comments both ways.

Regardless, the outcome was never really in doubt. Spray and pray against aimed semi-auto fire is a sure loser. And with a bullet weight 2½ times more than the 5.56, the 7.62 resulted in one shot kills or eliminating the combatant from the fight. Don't forget, the standing order was **no quarter**.

Not long after, the Colonel paid us another visit, having heard of the 'Battle of Phoenix'. It really wasn't a big deal, they spent a few days collecting statements, collected the stolen government weapons and left.

The Trials of George Thomas – Epilog

Those of us that got a little extra radiation exposure, by in large developed cancer in the later years. Maybe Helen grounding me was a good thing. I was the last to be diagnosed with cancer and surgery, chemo and radiation therapy eliminated it, at least temporarily. We're getting up in years and the oncologist seems hopeful that it won't reoccur. No promises, of course, but my oncologist says it's 'looking good'. Maybe he's right, the treatment was three years back and if I make it to five I might just make it.

Phoenix. Like many cities around the country, is once again a growing community with a population of about 25,000. Bill, Sam, Joe and Manny are all gone now. Their wives having the higher life expectancies and smaller radiation exposures are hanging in, bidding their time until it's their turn. Overall, our operation continued and expanded as more crops began to be grown here in Arizona. It's warmer now, but nowhere near what it was before the war. We have yet to hit 90°F as a daytime high. Agriculture exists between Phoenix and Tucson and produces enough to feed the entire Arizona population and export almost as much as is consumed locally.

The Midwest is making a comeback, but it has been slow. California, on the other hand, is producing the major share of food for American consumption. They have ample rain and have mostly gone green using natural fertilizers. They lost enough population that they now have more electrical power than they need. Circumstances finally forced them to open up offshore oil and gas production and their budget has been balanced or has produced a surplus for several of the past years.

The only remaining issue of any real importance is the use of coal for electrical generation. Most of the nuclear reactors around the US have reached the end of their useful lives and have been retired. That included Palo Verde, the principal source for Phoenix. There isn't hydroelectric power being generated that reaches Arizona because of damage to the grid. Locally, within Arizona, lines were repaired and coal power from Holbrook is our primary source. Technological advances have greatly reduced the carbon and CO₂ emissions for most of the power plants and they're still being upgraded as time and funds permit.

Phoenix proved not to be the typical city in terms of loss of life. Overall, 30% of the US populations survived...about 90 million in total. China ended up with a similar sized population. India and Pakistan figures are imprecise but it seems that about 20% of their populations survived as well.

The Mideast is far different than before the war. There is no nuclear ambiguity simply because Israel supposedly used every last weapon in their inventory. The only country they didn't strike was Turkey; although they threatened to if Turkey attempted any move against them. We presume they have some weapons safely tucked away in case Turkey moves on them.

Russia endured twenty years of severe weather, primarily because of the volcanic ash. They didn't use many of their nuclear weapons aside from those they used on China. They are THE Superpower these days. We still have all fourteen boomers and there's talk of a new Minuteman missile, the Minuteman IV. We have enough warheads in our stockpile to equip the missiles if they are, in fact, built. It seems rather reminiscent of the Peacekeeper missile. Various laboratories are upgrading older warheads in the stockpile to place aboard the new missiles.

We did finally have state and national elections. The Libertarians and Tea Party, combined, hold a majority in both the House and Senate. It was economically unfeasible to rebuild Washington, DC and the new national capital is now north of Wichita, Kansas a little north of McPherson.

I'd better wrap this up; Helen has homemade chili and warm French bread.

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